

THE IOHANNIS  
OR  
*DE BELLIS LIBYCIS* OF  
FLAVIUS CRESCONIUS CORIPPUS

TRANSLATED BY GEORGE W. SHEA





**THE *IOHANNIS* OR *DE BELLIS LIBYCIS*  
OF FLAVIUS CRESCONIUS CORIPPUS**

Introduction and Translation  
by  
George W. Shea

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my parents

Helen Brueckmann Shea

and

George A. Shea

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## PREFACE

My interest in the *Iohannis* or *de Bellis Libycis* of the sixth century African poet Flavius Cresconius Corippus grew out of my study of Latin poetry with the late Gilbert Highet, Anthon Professor of Latin at Columbia University. It resulted in my doctoral dissertation, which was submitted to that university in 1966. Four years later, in 1970, an excellent new Latin text of Corippus was produced by the English classicists, J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear and published by the Cambridge University Press. I decided then to revise and publish the translation appended to my dissertation, using the new edition and the many new insights into Corippus' text which it provided.

Unfortunately, administrative duties which I assumed shortly after the appearance of the Diggle and Goodyear edition forced me to postpone this undertaking. Indeed, it has only been in recent years that I have been able to contemplate its completion.

This volume contains my revised translation as well as a new introduction to the poem. The translation is based on the 1970 Cambridge text of the poem. The revision of my original translation has given me the opportunity to correct a number of earlier errors and inaccuracies and to attempt a more readable prose version. Much of the introduction is also new, although I have incorporated large sections of my 1966 dissertation into it. I have tried not only to make it more readable but also to give it a tighter structure by focusing first on Corippus' treatment of the historical material and the strategy of the Emperor Justinian and then on his role as apologist



for the Empire and the problems that this presented. In the last section, I have attempted to assess his performance as poet and propagandist. In doing this I have also incorporated into this study much of what appeared in two of my earlier articles on Corippus: "Justinian's North African Strategy in the Iohannis of Corippus" in *Byzantine Studies*, 10, pt.1 (1983), 29-38, and "Myth and Religion in an Early Christian Epic" in *Medieval Studies*, XXXV (1973), 118-128.

Even the edition of Diggle and Goodyear presents a translator with many textual problems. The reasons for this is obvious: the text is corrupt or lacunose in many places and, since we must rely upon a single manuscript for much of the poem, the passages in question resist definitive resolution. This problem is made even more complex by the fact that the appearance of the Diggle and Goodyear text evoked many new conjectures by other students of Corippus. While many of these are plausible, the absence of any other textual evidence makes their adoption problematic. I have, therefore, decided to follow the Diggle and Goodyear text except in two cases: A) when they leave the text in its corrupt state and when the context makes the sense of the passage clear and B) when I feel that a conjecture of my own or of another critic is clearly preferable. In both of these cases I have indicated in the notes the various emendations being followed. In a very few cases, where no clear emendation of the Latin text is possible. I have simply filled in the sense indicated without noting this. These cases are very rare and generally involve no more than one or two missing words. I have included in the bibliography a number of articles which offer many plausible alternate emendations. I recommend these to my readers' attention. My failure to adopt these readings should not be construed as a negative judgment of the conjectures offered. Rather, it reflects, as I noted above, my belief that a definitive resolution of these *cruces* is not possible

given the textual evidence available, and my desire to stay as close as possible to the Diggle and Goodyear text, which is likely to be the one consulted by anyone using my translation.

Readers should note that the bracketed line numbers at the top of each page of the translation refer to the Latin text and that lacunae in the text are indicated by a set of asterisks.

In closing I would like to express my gratitude both to the late Professor Gilbert Highet and to Professor William M. Calder III, who guided and encouraged my study of Corippus. I would also like to acknowledge my debt to Fordham University, which, in providing me with a faculty fellowship, made the completion of this book possible. To my colleagues at that University and to colleagues at the University of New South Wales where I spent a portion of my leave and finished this work I also extend my thanks for their assistance and support. Finally, to my wife, Shirley Ashton Shea, I extend my deepest appreciation for her patience, encouragement and assistance in the preparation of this text.

♦ ♦ ♦



## INTRODUCTION

For those interested in world order, in the forms which it has taken in Western history and in the rhetoric which has been employed to legitimize those forms, Corippus' epic, the *Iohannis* or *de Bellis Lybicus* is a text of considerable importance. The poem was written in the sixth century of our era and deals with Justinian's attempt to reconquer Africa. Specifically, it treats the wars undertaken by his *magister militiae*, Iohannes Troglyta, in order to subdue the native Berber tribes who had risen in rebellion after the collapse of the Vandal kingdom. The political and military situation which provides the background for the poem's narrative is complex but typical. A native people, itself in considerable political disarray, rises against the rule of relatively recent invaders, and in that moment the dominant "world power," the resurgent eastern empire, takes advantage of the resulting confusion by launching an attempt to reassert its own hegemony over the region. In this action, one of the last such attempts made by the Roman Empire, Justinian's motives and strategies recall those of earlier Roman conquerors. As in the past, a will to dominate restless and troublesome nations on the periphery of the Roman realm is reinforced by clear commercial and mercantile interests. In this case, however, the *debellare superbos* and *parcere subiectis* themes are informed not only by the traditional Roman arguments for *concordia* based on *lex* but also by the imperatives imposed by the Christian faith whose guardian was the Emperor himself. Thus the actions of Justinian in Africa in the sixth century looked not only backward to the conquests of



earlier Emperors but forward as well to the European conquests of other lands almost a millennium later. Will to power and economic gain are disguised by pleas for a world order mandated by religion and reason, as well as by a concern for the souls of the recalcitrant and therefore backward native peoples.

The epic's claim to our attention does not, however, lie in the history it presents alone. Corippus saw himself as Justinian's Vergil. His poem is therefore the rhetorical instrument by which the imperial will and its actions are to be justified. In reading this text, then, we are studying the author of what is the last Roman dynastic epic as he struggles to adapt the poetic techniques of his models to a political and literary problem that is at once similar and different. He will need to adapt the rhetoric of traditional epic poetry to the needs and sensibilities of a Christian realm and its court. The working out of that adaptation deserves the attention of students of both ancient and modern poetics, particularly since it is in this case achieved by a native African of seemingly humble birth, a school teacher of Carthage, who may or may not have viewed the struggle he would describe in precisely the same moral terms as his powerful patrons.

### The Author

Facts about the life of this remarkable African poet must be drawn from his works.<sup>1</sup> His full name, Flavius Cresconius Corippus, appeared in only one manuscript, the *Budensis*, which is now lost; elsewhere he is referred to simply as Corippus or Cresconius.<sup>2</sup> He was born in Africa, probably around the beginning of the sixth century, for he mentions his own advanced age in the panegyric which he wrote in honor of Justin at the beginning of that Emperor's reign in AD 565.<sup>3</sup> The exact place of his birth and the region in which he spent his earlier years are not known, but it is probable that he lived in the countryside not far from Carthage, the

city to which he came later in his life to recite his epic. That he did not live in the city itself as a young man is suggested in the preface of his poem in which he states: "*quid quod ego ignarus, quondam per rura locutus, / urbis per populos carmina mitto palam?*" (*Ioh.*, Praef., 25-26).<sup>4</sup> We know that he spent the earlier part of his life as a teacher not only because of his remarkable knowledge of the Latin poets of the classical age but also because he is referred to in the *Codex Matritensis* as *Africanus Grammaticus*.<sup>5</sup> He himself tells us that he wrote poetry before the composition of his epic, but none of it has survived, and so we can only guess that it may have been bucolic verse from Corippus' own statement that his muse was *rustica*.<sup>6</sup> There can be little doubt that Corippus witnessed many of the events he describes in his epic, but whether he came to Carthage before or during the period in which they occurred and whether he was actually present on the campaigns of John Troglyta we cannot know for certain. We do know, however, that he was in Carthage not long after the Roman victory over the natives, for it was in that city that he read some and possibly all of his poem to the Roman leaders.

Indeed, the composition and recitation of the *Iohannis* may have been the reason for Corippus' departure from Africa and appearance in Constantinople, for in the preface to the epic he asks for a favor.<sup>7</sup> In any case, the next time we hear of him he is in the capital, holding a position at the imperial court. He refers to this post as a *principis officium*,<sup>8</sup> but provides his readers with no further information about its exact nature. He later refers to the importance of writing in the work he does and, if he is not referring to the composition of his second poem, the panegyric itself, this may indicate that he was employed as a scribe.<sup>9</sup> If he did hold a secretarial post, we can further conjecture that he may have worked in the office of the Quaestor Anastasius, to whom he dedicated his panegyric. Finally, it is not unlikely that he was in some way concerned in his work with western and Africa affairs, for he mentions in the first book of his panegyric two figures who were concerned with that



part of the empire: Thomas, probably the Prefect of Africa,<sup>10</sup> and Magnus, who may have been an auditor in Italy.<sup>11</sup>

Corippus wrote his paenegyric not long after the death of Justinian and the accession of Justin. Once again, he wrote to obtain a favor, this time constrained by some misfortune he had suffered. He speaks of this misfortune in vague terms in the preface to his poem,<sup>12</sup> but its exact nature cannot be determined. His use of the words *nudatus propriis* in his plea suggests the loss of property, perhaps in Africa due to upheavals there, but his reference to *vulnera* is a mystery.<sup>13</sup>

Partsch, one of Corippus' earlier editors, placed the composition of the panegyric at the end of AD 567.<sup>14</sup> The poem is, in any case, the last we hear of Corippus. Whether or not he received the Emperor's assistance we cannot tell. We may assume, however, that, since he was advanced in age when he wrote his second poem, he died not long after its composition.

### The Text

As information about Corippus' life must be drawn largely from the meager evidence which his poems provide, so those poems themselves have survived in the form of single manuscripts, the *Iohannis* in the *Trivultianus* (14th cent.), and the *Panegyric* in the *Matritensis* (10th cent.). The names of two other manuscripts which contained the *Iohannis* are known but both are now lost. The *Casinensis* was perhaps the oldest, for it is mentioned in an eleventh century catalogue as well as in a catalogue from the fifteenth century.<sup>15</sup> What happened to it subsequently, however, we do not know. The second lost manuscript, the *Budensis*, was seen at Buda in the beginning of the sixteenth century by an author of that period named Cuspianus.<sup>16</sup> Cuspianus included in his report a quotation of the first five lines of the epic's first book, a quotation which, for a time, posed a serious problem for scholars. Cuspianus' quotation did not begin with the word *Victoriis*, as the *Casinensis* was said to have

begun. It was in fact the discovery of the third and surviving manuscript, the *Trivultianus*, that solved the mystery, for it made clear that the *Casinensis* included the Preface to the epic which does indeed begin with the word *Victoriis* and that the *Budensis* either lacked the Preface or that Cuspianus chose not to quote its first lines but the opening lines of the first book instead.

The *Trivultianus* was discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the library of the Count Trivulzi in Milan. It lacks two pages of the text as well as the final lines of the epic. Ignorance of the existence of the manuscript until so late a period is due to the fact that it had been mistakenly attributed to an Italian author of the fourteenth century, Giovanni de Bonis di Arezzo. As a result, it had been grouped with his works until its discovery by Mazzuchelli.

In addition to the text provided by the *Trivultianus*, twenty-two lines of the poem have survived in the *Excerpta Veronensis*, also of the fourteenth century. Although it provides but a few lines, the *Excerpta Veronensis* does solve the problem of how the poem was divided into books. The *Trivultianus* is divided into seven; the *Budensis* is said to have contained eight. From the *Excerpta Veronensis* we learn that the fourth book of the *Trivultianus* was divided by at least one editor into two books at line 644.

Four editions of Corippus' poems appeared in the nineteenth century. The first is that of Mazzuchelli himself, which was published in 1820. It includes an introduction, the text, commentary and partial index. The next edition is that of I. Bekker, which appeared in *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* in 1836. In addition to the text it includes introductions by Mazzuchelli, Ruiz, Dempster, Vonck and Foggini, as well as Mazzuchelli's commentary and index. The third edition is that of J. Partsch which appeared in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* in 1879. It includes a valuable introduction by Partsch. The final edition of the last century is that of M. Petschenig, published in *Berliner Studien* in 1886. It includes a brief



introduction by the editor, an index of proper names and of difficult or unusual words and Petschenig's interpretation of many peculiar usages in the poems.

In our own century one edition of the *Iohannis* has appeared, that of J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1970. These two editors divided the editorial task, Diggle taking the responsibility for the Preface and the odd-numbered books, Goodyear for the remainder. They assure their readers, however, that they scrutinized one another's work and that the text represents the best judgement of both editors. Their edition is a relatively conservative one. A number of lines are left unemended and obelized, and there is a very full discussion of textual difficulties in the *apparatus*, as well as indication of the rare differences of opinion between the editors themselves. In addition to the brief preface, there is a bibliography, and an index of historical and geographical names, as well as a brief topical index. Prospective readers should be alerted to the fact that all of the contents of the volume are in Latin.

### Historical Background

Before turning to the campaign of John Troglyta, which constitutes the subject of Corippus' epic, it is necessary to review the events which preceded that campaign in order to place the narrative in its historical context. Fortunately, the history of the period is dealt with not only by Corippus in his poem but also by Procopius in his *de Bello Vandalico*.<sup>17</sup> Comparison of the two authors' accounts will, therefore, enable the reader both to understand the sequence of events more fully and to test the accuracy of Corippus, who was, after all, writing with an eye to earning imperial favor. In addition to Procopius, a number of other historians and chroniclers are also of assistance in identifying and dating the events in question, among them Marcellinus Comes,<sup>18</sup> Paulus Diaconus,<sup>19</sup> Jordanes,<sup>20</sup> Victor Tonnennensis<sup>21</sup> and Marius Episcopus.<sup>22</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

The earliest event treated by Corippus in his poem is the first revolt of Antalas and his native followers against the aged Vandal king, Hildimer. This account is given in the long speech of the Roman tribune, Liberatus Caecilides (*Ioh.* 3.171 ff.). In it we are led to believe that the revolt of Antalas was the immediate cause of the overthrow of Hildimer. In the account of Procopius, however, this causal relationship is less clear. While he notes Antalas' victory over Hildimer, he does not represent it as the cause of the end of the king's reign. The king's overthrow, he tells us, was the result of a plot laid by his successor, Geilamir, who used as one of his excuses for usurping the throne the fact that Hildimer had been too weak to withstand the natives' attack (*B. Vand.* 1.9.8).

Procopius and Corippus agree that it was at this point in the course of events that Justinian decided to send Belisarius against the Vandals in hope of regaining the lost provinces of Africa. This expedition is recalled briefly by Liberatus Caecilides (*Ioh.* 3.277 ff.) and twice by John Troglyta himself (*Ioh.* 1.366-408, 3.13-34). In these passages Corippus reports only that Belisarius was the commander of the Roman forces, that Geilamir was the tyrant of the Vandals and that John, the hero of his own poem, went on this earlier expedition accompanied by his brother Pappus, who died during the campaign. We also learn from the poet that the Roman fleet drew up at Caput Vadorum<sup>23</sup> and that the Roman army eventually captured Carthage. His account ends with the capture of Geilamir and the end of Vandal power in Africa in its hundredth year.<sup>24</sup>

Belisarius' expedition against the Vandals is described by Procopius as well (*B. Vand.* 1.12-2.9). He provides more details but does not differ from Corippus on the essential facts. According to Procopius, the expedition set sail in the spring of the seventh year of the reign of Justinian, AD 533. After stopping at Caucana in Sicily, it arrived, about three months after its departure from Constantinople, at Caput Vadorum, where the army disembarked. Three months later, in December of AD



533, the Romans gained a decisive victory over the Vandals at Tricamarum, one hundred and fifty stades from Carthage. At this battle Pappus is said to have been one of the commanders on the right wing and a certain John, perhaps Corippus' hero, a commander on the left. The center of the Roman line was commanded by Belisarius and John the Armenian, who was killed shortly thereafter and should not, therefore, be confused with the hero of our poem. After the battle Belisarius sent one of his subordinates to Caesarea with a small force. This man also bore the name John and may well have been our hero, who is once referred to in the epic of Corippus as "*vicinaeque maris quondam servator harenae*." (*Ioh.* 1.472). Procopius concludes his account of the expedition of Belisarius with the capture of Geilamir and the departure of the Roman commander for Constantinople with his captive.

The period between the departure of Belisarius from Africa and the arrival of the hero of Corippus' poem may be divided into four parts: the second revolt of the natives and their defeat by the Roman general Solomon, the revolt of the Roman soldier Stutias and his defeat by Belisarius and Germanus, the third native uprising and the response of the Roman commander John, the son of Sisiniolus, along with the struggle of Sergius and Ariobindeus, and finally the machinations of Guntarith and his attempt to establish himself as tyrant.

Corippus makes clear that his hero, John, remained in Africa after the departure of Belisarius and served under Belisarius' successor, Solomon, who put down several minor native rebellions (*Ioh.* 3.291ff.).<sup>25</sup> The most serious of these uprisings was the revolt of the Numidians under their chieftain Iaudas. Even this challenge to Roman rule, however, met with little success, for Iaudas was forced to retreat to his own mountain hiding places from which he dared not venture forth against Solomon.

Procopius describes these events in detail (*B. Vand.* 2.8-13) and tells an interesting story about a peculiar prophecy that prompted the renewal of hostilities

after the departure of Belisarius from Africa. Apparently the natives had been warned in a prophecy that they would be destroyed by a beardless Roman and, when they discovered that the entire Roman garrison was bearded, revolted at once. Among their leaders, Procopius reports, was Cusina, whom we shall find among the allies of the Romans in later wars. On the other hand, Antalas, the villain of Corippus' poem, remained loyal to the imperial cause at this point, a fact referred to by Corippus several times (*Ioh.* 2.34-35, 4.362-371).

Further details provided by Procopius confirm and supplement Corippus' account of the events of this first interim period. Solomon defeats the tribes of Byzacium at Mammes and Burgaon, and they flee to Iaudas in Numidia (*B. Vand.* 2.11-12). When Iaudas begins to ravage Numidia, Solomon moves against him, forcing Iaudas to retreat to Mt. Aurasias, a stronghold against which Solomon and his native allies are unable to launch attack because of their fear of an ambush (*B. Vand.* 2.13). Unfortunately, there is no mention of the hero of Corippus' epic in Procopius' account.

The revolt of the Roman soldier Stutias launches the sequence of events that constitute the second phase of the intermediate period under consideration. These events are dealt with by Corippus in only sixteen lines (*Ioh.*, 3.305-319) and his account is rather vague and confusing. He tells us only that Stutias revived the civil war, that he fled before Belisarius at Membressa,<sup>26</sup> and that during a campaign led by a general named Germanus, John, the hero of his epic, fought at Scalae Veteres and Autenti.<sup>27</sup> The courage of John is, as might be expected, stressed in this account.

Procopius' narrative is much fuller. He tells us that the revolt of Stutias took place in the tenth year of the rule of Justinian, AD 536. He gives as the reason for the rebellion both Solomon's attempt to confiscate the lands belonging to the Roman soldiers' Vandal brides and the harsh treatment of the Arians among the Roman army (*B. Vand.* 2.14.7-15). The revolt, which spread quickly, forced Solomon to flee



and Belisarius to return to Africa (*B. Vand.* 2.15-17). Procopius also reports that after sailing to Carthage from Syracuse with the fugitive Solomon, Belisarius pursued the rebels to Membressa, routed them and quickly returned to Sicily without bothering to destroy his opponents and their leader. As a result, Stutias was able to flee with the remnants of his army to Numidia where he won over many more Roman soldiers and put their officers to death. The Emperor was therefore forced to send a second expedition to Africa under his nephew Germanus. Germanus was successful in winning back the loyalty of the rebellious soldiers and, by doing so, provoked Stutias to risk battle at Scalae Veteres. It was there that Stutias was defeated for the second time.

The most remarkable discrepancy between the accounts of Procopius and Corippus arises from their treatment of John himself and serves to remind the reader that he needs to be wary of Corippus' accounts of his hero's deeds. In Procopius' narrative we are told that John and his men were attacked at Scalae Veteres, were unable to hold their positions and fled in confusion (*B. Vand.* 2.17.16-17). In Corippus' poem, however, Scalae Veteres is said to have looked upon John "*miro amore*" and Autenti to have watched him "*saevos mactantem hostes*" (*Ioh.* 3.318-319), both of which phrases side-step the Roman defeat.

The third stage in this series of preliminary events is preceded by the recall of Germanus from Africa and the resumption of power by Solomon in the thirteenth year of Justinian's rule, AD 540 (*B. Vand.* 2.19.1). When Solomon returned to Africa, he undertook another campaign against Iaudas in Numidia and, in spite of the initial defeat of his own ally, Guntarith, was able to overcome the native chieftain and force him to withdraw. This victory brought peace and prosperity to Africa, but several years later, probably in AD 543,<sup>28</sup> the land was afflicted by the great pestilence that had attacked other parts of the Roman world. According to Procopius (*B. Pers.* 2.22) it had first broken out in Egypt in AD 542. It is possible that it was

brought to western Africa from Constantinople where it struck a year after its initial appearance. The pestilence, which is described in some detail by Corippus (*Ioh.* 3.343-390) did not, it seems, afflict the native tribes, and indeed it was probably the fear of the disease that put off the next great rising of the Laguatans under Antalas until the next year.<sup>29</sup>

Corippus' account of the Laguatan uprising is given in the long narrative of Liberatus Caecilides (*Ioh.* 3.391-4.218). He reports that when Solomon learned of the natives' action he marched against them with his allies, Pelagius and the chieftain Cusina. In the subsequent encounter, his army was forced to flee because of the treachery of Guntarith, and Solomon himself was killed in the rout that followed. After this victory, the rebels proceeded to Hadrumentum where they tricked the Thracian commander Himerus into surrendering the city by sending him a false message in the name of the Roman general John, the son of Sisiniola. At this point in the narrative Corippus shifts his attention to the arrival of one Ariobindeus, presumably a newly appointed Roman official, and goes on to take note of a subsequent struggle for power between two Roman leaders. He never makes explicit who these leaders were. The only additional fact he provides is the report of a later battle between the forces of John, the son of Sisiniola, and the natives, who had been joined by the rebel Roman soldier, Stutias and the remnants of his twice-defeated army. In this action both John, the commander and Stutias were killed.

Procopius' account of these events is much fuller (*B. Vand.* 2.21-24) and both completes and corrects Corippus' sketchy narrative. He informs us, for example, that the troubles with the natives began in Tripolitania, at the city of Leptis Magna, where Solomon's nephew, Sergius, was in command. It was there that Sergius, after he had slain some of the native chieftains at a banquet, was routed on the battlefield by the surviving native force. After this defeat Sergius was joined by his uncle Solomon, and together they faced the Laguatans at Tebesta.<sup>30</sup> The Laguatans were led by



Antalas at this encounter. It will be recalled that he was a former Roman ally, but he had fallen out with Solomon, Procopius tells us, over the loss of the maintenance the Emperor had promised him and because of the assassination of his brother by Romans.

The battle at Tebesta, Procopius says, was lost by the Romans not because of the treachery of Guntarith, as Corippus suggests, but because Solomon refused to distribute the booty he had taken in a skirmish with the enemy just before the battle. It was for this reason that his disgruntled soldiers fled and left him to be killed. As for the deception of Himerus, it too is described in a much different way by Procopius. In the historian's account, a warning letter from John, the son of Sisiniola, failed to reach Himerus, who was therefore ambushed and captured. He was himself forced to betray the city of Hadrumentum and hand it over to the enemy.

Who then was Ariobindeus, the new arrival on the scene? Procopius provides the answer. He tells us that Sergius became the commander in Africa after the death of his uncle Solomon but that shortly thereafter the Emperor sent Ariobindeus to share the command with him. Along with this man came a number of military aides, among them the Prefect Athanasius and an Armenian officer by the name of Artabanes. It appears that a quarrel of some kind arose between Sergius and Ariobindeus, as Corippus himself suggests. The struggle had more disastrous results, however, than Corippus admits, for Sergius refused to join Ariobindeus and John, the son of Sisiniola, when they faced the Moors at the subsequent battle of Sicca Veneria.<sup>31</sup> And so, with an insufficient force, John was defeated and killed, after killing the rebel leader Stutias. It was only after that defeat that the Emperor, realizing that his plan for shared power in Africa had failed, recalled Sergius and placed all power in the hands of Ariobindeus.

Corippus' account of these events is curious in several respects. First, he makes Guntarith the scapegoat for Solomon's defeat, something of which there is no

mention in Procopius' version. This is, perhaps, a poet's attempt to make a subsequent villain appear more sinister and a Roman hero more tragic. Next, he appears to change the story of the capture of Hadrumentum, for what reason it is hard to tell. Did he, as an African, have information unavailable to Procopius, for surely neither his account nor the historian's presents the Romans in a particularly poor light? Finally, the struggle between Sergius and Ariobindeus is certainly glossed over, probably to conceal the imperial error which made the campaign of his own hero necessary.

The fourth and final series of events that precede the campaign of John Troglyta is given scant attention by Corippus. He reports only that Guntarith treacherously made himself tyrant; that his tyranny was short-lived and that the Armenian, Artabanes, killed him at the banquet table (*Ioh.* 4.219-242). This account, although in no way inaccurate, omits a great deal of what was an extremely complicated plot. Once again, the account of Procopius is much fuller (*B. Vand.* 2.25-28). We learn from it that after the departure of Sergius, Ariobindeus, now the sole Roman commander, proposed an attack on the natives, who were led by Antalas, Cusina and Iaudas. He asked Guntarith to join him in this undertaking, but Guntarith made a secret alliance with Antalas instead, promising him a share in the rule of Africa. At the same time Ariobindeus himself entered into a counterplot with Cusina for the betrayal of Antalas. Neither of these schemes succeeded, it seems, for Ariobindeus was in the end unwilling to face the natives in battle. Guntarith was therefore forced to make a move against Ariobindeus on his own. This he did, forcing him to flee and then slaying him. His rule was, however, also brief, for his precipitous act alienated his former ally Antalas as well as the lieutenants of Ariobindeus, Athanasius and Artabanes. After thirty-six days of tyranny, Guntarith was, as Corippus notes, assassinated at his own dinner table.<sup>32</sup>



In spite of the brevity of his account, Corippus does clarify several issues raised by these events. First, he makes clear that the plot against Guntarith was actually laid by Athanasius, a matter left vague by Procopius (*Ioh.* 4.232-240). Furthermore, he indicates that Antalas was a party to the scheme as well (*Ioh.* 4.367-369). Both of these pieces of information are probably accurate, for in Procopius' account Artabanes calls upon Athanasius for help after Guntarith's assassination, and the involvement of Antalas would help to explain his later bitterness and disappointment as well as the savage war he waged against the Romans. Interestingly, both of these pieces of information serve his poetic needs as well: the first makes Athanasius, who later aids John Troglyta, a more sympathetic figure and the second provides the motive for Antalas' rejection of John's offer of peace.

Corippus' hero had, as we have seen, earlier military experience in the African campaigns of Belisarius and Solomon. Corippus also reports that he had seen service in the East before he took command of the Emperor's forces in Africa and conducted the campaigns which are the subject of his epic. In the poem's first book Corippus has the Emperor reflect upon John's exploits in Persia, both of which need to be considered before we turn to the events narrated in the *Iohannis* itself.

Two military actions are mentioned by Corippus. First, John is said to have taken part in the defeat of a certain Nabedes at Nisibis (*Ioh.* 1.58-69).<sup>33</sup> This appears to be the battle which Procopius says took place in AD 541 during Belisarius' campaign against the Parthians (*B. Pers.* 2.18). According to the historian, two of Belisarius' subordinates, Peter and John, who is referred to simply as the commander of the troops in Mesopotamia, disobeyed the commands of their general, allowed their men to approach the enemy in disorder and were nearly routed. Only the timely arrival of Belisarius saved their army. It would appear from this account that, if the John in question is his hero, which seems likely, Corippus has either distorted or

corrected the facts by turning what seems in Procopius to be disobedience into daring courage.

The second action mentioned by Corippus is that conducted against a Persian general named Mermeroes (*Ioh.* 1.69-109). His account includes the successful defense of the cities of Theodosopolis and Daras<sup>34</sup> by John Troglyta and the capture of Mermeroes himself. There is little evidence in Procopius for these events. A siege of Theodosopolis is nowhere mentioned. A battle which sounds like this one was indeed fought at Daras but against a leader named Perozes (*B. Pers.* 1.13-14). That battle took place, however, in AD 530, long before John's first experience in Africa in AD 533, when, according to Corippus, he arrived with Belisarius "*fretus iuvenilibus armis*" (*Ioh.* 1.379). Finally, the only commander at the battle of Daras who bore the name John was John the son of Nicetas, whom we have no reason to identify with the hero of Corippus' epic, whose father's name is given in the poem as Evantis (*Ioh.* 8.576). We can only conclude that Corippus is narrating events omitted by Procopius or that he attributed to his hero the acts of others. Possibly he was misinformed about actions about which he had no independent knowledge. This certainly cannot be ruled out, for it is certainly unusual to find the capture of a Persian general overlooked by Procopius, who is elsewhere quite thorough in his accounts.<sup>35</sup>

We may now proceed to a consideration of the events which constitute the subject of Corippus' epic, the struggle between the imperial forces of John Troglyta and the rebellious native tribes of north Africa.<sup>36</sup> The date of John's appointment as Justinian's *magister militiae* in Africa is relatively easy to establish. According to Procopius (*B. Vand.* 2.28.42-45), Artabanes was made commander in Africa immediately after the death of Guntarith and, not long after that, was recalled to the capital and replaced by John. Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon* p.945) notes that after Guntarith was slain John was sent to Africa "*aliquantos post dies*." Both authors



agree then that little time elapsed between the killing of Guntarith and the appointment of John, which we can therefore place late in the year AD 546 or early in AD 547.<sup>37</sup>

The duration of the campaign is, however, more difficult to determine. Procopius states that John's first victory over the native tribes was gained soon after his arrival in Africa (*B. Vand.* 2.28.46). He then adds that the tribes returned to the offensive and were defeated again but only after a serious Roman defeat (*B. Vand.* 2.28.47-52).<sup>38</sup> We should take note of the fact that Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon* p. 945) states that the final Roman victory came much later and suggests that the war continued from AD 549 to AD 551. It is difficult to explain this discrepancy between his account and those of Corippus and Procopius, both of whom seem to agree that the final victory came not long after John's assumption of command. It is possible, of course, that our poet telescoped the events of several years into a shorter period for dramatic effect. On the other hand, it is also not unlikely that after the initial victories of AD 547 John was faced with the task of putting down a number of less serious rebellions.<sup>39</sup> At any rate, we may assume that for all practical purposes John's war in Africa was over by at least AD 551, for in his account of the Gothic War (*B. Goth.* 4.24.33-34) Procopius notes that he sent a fleet to relieve Sardinia in about AD 552, an unlikely move, had he himself been involved in a serious struggle with the natives at that time.

As for the general outline of the war, Corippus and Procopius agree in dividing it into two separate campaigns. The first, which occurs immediately after John's arrival in Africa, takes place in Byzacium near Antonia Castra<sup>40</sup> and ends with the first defeat of the native forces. The second occurs somewhat later but not, as we have seen, very long after the first victory. This second campaign begins in the south, and in its first battle the Romans are defeated at a river in Gallica<sup>41</sup> and forced

to retreat to Laribus.<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, after regrouping his forces, John faces his enemy at a place called Campi Catonis<sup>43</sup> and defeats them decisively.

Corippus has structured his epic in such a way that the first book contains no scenes of battle. It recounts the hero's departure from Constantinople, his voyage, the anchoring of his fleet at Caput Vadorum, which was the site of Belisarius' earlier landing in Africa, his arrival at Carthage and the march of the army from that city to Antonia Castra. There John receives the legates from the native tribes, who haughtily challenge him to battle. John accepts their challenge, high-handedly takes them prisoner and prepares his army for war.

The second book begins with a catalogue of the native tribes. It then describes the scouting party of two of John's captains, Geisirith and Amantius, who are ambushed by the enemy and then rescued by the swift arrival of their general. John then moves his troops closer to the enemy positions and, during the night, sends a messenger to their commander.

The entire third book and the first two hundred and eighty-five lines of the fourth contain the long speech of Liberatus Caecilides in which he recounts the causes of the war and the events that had occurred before John's arrival.<sup>44</sup> The central narrative resumes after daybreak with the return of John's messenger, who reports that the native leaders have refused to send back the civilian hostages they had taken and that they will neither return to their own lands nor subject themselves to the Emperor. Faced with their rejection, John marshalls his army at once, and the enemy come forward to meet him.<sup>45</sup>

The battle which ensues is described in the remainder of the fourth book and in the entire fifth book.<sup>46</sup> In this encounter the Romans gain an early advantage and are on the point of driving the foe off in defeat when Bruten, one of the native leaders, rallies his men, and Antalas himself, who had been holding his own troops in reserve, sweeps onto the plain. His appearance turns the tide and the natives



launch a counter-attack, forcing the Romans to flee. Only the quick reaction and bold deeds of John and his lieutenants save the day. After an account of their heroism, the fifth book draws to a close with the description of the capture of the enemy camp and the flight of the rebel army. The victory appears to be complete, for both the hostages and the standards of Solomon, which had been lost years earlier, are recovered.

The sixth book begins with a description of the complete disorganization of the natives and with an account of John's triumphal entry into Carthage. Peace proves, however, to be short-lived, for even as the Romans celebrate their victory, the native commanders, Carcasan and Bruten, are exhorting their followers to renew the attack.<sup>47</sup> John reacts to this second challenge by marching to meet the enemy at once, and the sixth book contains an account of that campaign's first encounter which proves to be a Roman defeat.

Here are the details. After listening to the speeches of Carcasan and Bruten, the native tribes summon their allies. Then, joined by the Nasamonians, they once again attack the borders of Byzacium. John, fearing the destruction which another war within the province would wreak on the inhabitants, decides to seek out and destroy the rebels. The natives, however, when they learn of his approach, flee to the desert whither the Romans pursue them. There, the heat and the scarcity of food prove unendurable, and the Romans are forced to retreat. In fact, the army is so demoralized by these hardships that a mutiny breaks out just as John is negotiating a treaty with the Astrices, a people through whose lands he must pass.

After John succeeds in calming his men and regaining their confidence, he receives word that the enemy are in sight. Although doubtful himself about how to react, he is persuaded by Cusina to advance to a nearby river and take possession of the water which the native tribes will need for their survival. The army moves toward Gallica<sup>48</sup> with this in mind, but after pitching their tents some of the Romans

fall upon some of the enemy by chance and pursue them in no formation and without command. When the news reaches John, he is at first reluctant to act, but once again two of his subordinates, Ariarith and Ziper, persuade him to advance to the aid of those in contact with the enemy. He agrees to do so, placing the native allies in the advance party, it seems, for it is they who are ambushed in the thick vegetation along the river bank. The difficulties offered by the terrain and their own poor discipline are exploited by the foe, who drive them off. John arrives too late and, in spite of the brave deeds of many individual Romans, the army is routed. The book ends with their defeat and with the spectacular death of the Roman captain, John the Elder, who leaps on horseback into a quicksand ravine and is swallowed up.

The seventh book contains a description of the regrouping of both armies. John proceeds first to Vinci or Iunci, and then to Laribus.<sup>49</sup> While there he is sent supplies and reinforcements from Carthage by the Prefect Athanasius and his son Peter.<sup>50</sup> Cusina provides additional troops as well. At the same time Carcasan is once again joined by Antalas, who proposes a plan for luring the Romans deeper into the desert. The plan is adopted, the natives pretend to flee and John sends out a patrol under the command of Liberatus Caecilides in order to ascertain their intentions. Several native soldiers are captured, among them one Varinnus, who divulges Antalas' scheme.

At the beginning of the eighth and final book Corippus describes a second Roman mutiny and its eventual failure. The camp of the native tribes is, he informs us, in confusion as well, suffering badly from a lack of rations. As a result, its commanders are forced to risk a pitched battle. In this final battle, they launch two separate attacks against the Roman lines, one against the troops under John's command which is quickly repulsed and a second against the force of Cusina which is at first successful. John, however, hastens to Cusina's sector of the battlefield, and the Roman army eventually gains the upper hand there as well. Once again the brave



acts of the Roman commanders are fully described. The Roman captain, Putzintulus, is slain, and John himself kills the native chieftain Carcasan. Although the final lines of the poem are lost, the last fragment seems to contain a description of the Roman army as it hunts down the last of the fugitive natives. The Roman victory appears to have been complete.

Having completed a review of the historical material from which Corippus shaped his poem, we must ask how reliable he is. In doing this we ought to take cognizance of the fact that he does indeed present information about the military exploits of John Troglyta and the successes of his army which can be found in no other author.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, comparison of his text with that of Procopius has occasionally indicated that caution needs to be exercised in considering this information. We have found that Corippus, either deliberately or because of the unreliability of his own sources, sometimes attributes deeds to individuals who did not perform them, that he may have twisted the acts of some to make them appear better or worse than they were, that he omits or glosses over events that did not suit his poem and that he in general exaggerates the valor and accomplishments of the Roman army.

In this connection it is worth recalling that his own preface informs the reader that he wrote his epic in order to obtain a favor from the Roman leaders in Africa, presumably John and his staff (*Ioh.* praef. 29-30, 36). A poet in that position may very well have considered historical accuracy less important than the gaining of patronage. In view of this, it is probably fair to draw this conclusion: that as a native of Africa Corippus was close to the events he narrated and thus can provide us with a wealth of information and detail. The facts which he would have no reason to distort, geographical and ethnographical information for example, are probably accurately presented. Matters which touch upon his patrons and their individual and imperial interests, however, often need to be subjected to careful scrutiny.<sup>52</sup>

### Corippus as Imperial Apologist

We may now turn to the question of Corippus' presentation of the social, economic and political situation in Africa and the manner in which he presents both the claims of the native inhabitants and the Roman imperial agenda. In doing so we must deal not so much with the truth or falsehood of the individual actions which he recounts, but rather with his attitude toward the principal actors in his narrative and with the ethical and political perspective which informs his text. To accomplish this it will be necessary to consider more carefully what the Roman strategy in Africa was and how that strategy was legitimized both by the imperial court and by Corippus in his use of the Latin rhetorical tradition.

The social and political situation in Africa which Corippus presents was by no means new or unusual. As in earlier centuries Roman power found itself allied with the mercantile interests of the cities and with the agricultural interests of the neighboring farming population. Opposed to these interests were the ambitions and expectations of a vigorous and aggressive population of native tribesmen, many of them nomadic herdsmen who inevitably came into conflict with the farmers who had been settled on the frontiers by the Romans.

Roman sympathies lay with the farmers and with the merchants of the cities. In Corippus' epic the chief images of the horrors of war involve the destruction of cities and of the crops and herds within the Roman provinces (*Ioh.* 3.441-460 e.g.). In addition there are repeated references to the *captivi* or hostages taken by the natives, and we can only assume that these were the rural inhabitants of the land, possibly the *limitanei* who had been settled on the frontier by Belisarius at the command of the Emperor himself.<sup>53</sup> So prominent is this concern with agriculture, in fact, that it permeates even the stylistic devices of the poem, many of whose figures are, for example, based on imagery drawn from farming and related occupations (*Ioh.* 2.299-304, 3.145-151, 8.513-517, 8.536-540).



Associated with these agricultural interests were the commercial interests of the African cities to which the farmers' produce was transported. Understandably these cities were likewise a source of concern for the Romans, and they in turn appear to have supported the Roman cause. Carthage, for example, celebrates the Roman victories and laments its losses (*Ioh.* 6.58-103).

As we have seen (n. 34), the native tribes who threatened these interests inhabited three regions beyond the Roman frontier, the interior of Byzacium, the Syrtis Maior and Numidia. Given the differences in their habitats, it is not surprising that there were some differences in their cultures as well. Some farm, although their farming seems somewhat primitive (*Ioh.* 2.72-73, 2.145-148, 2.156-157). Others are fishermen (*Ioh.* 2.120-122) and many have large flocks of cattle which they use both for nourishment and for protection in battle (*Ioh.* 2.93-96, 2.396-399). In spite of these differences, however, they seem to share a common love of movement from place to place, a delight in warfare, a hardy valor in battle and an attraction to the wealth of the provinces and to Roman power (*Ioh.* 2.159-161, 3.273-275, 6.240-241).<sup>54</sup>

This tension between the agricultural and mercantile interests of the African provinces and the ambitions and needs of these frontier tribes was further complicated by other factors which characterized the African world of the sixth century. The first of these was the weak Vandal regime that had replaced Roman power a century earlier. During the hundred years of their rule, the Vandals appear to have grown less and less able to protect the interests of their subjects until, as we have seen, the last of the Vandal kings, Hildimer, was defeated by a band of rebellious natives. Nor was the Vandal regime itself free from internal intrigues. We have also seen that Hildimer was briefly succeeded by a Vandal usurper, Geilamir, who was himself deposed by the Romans. This Vandal capacity for intrigue and deception manifested itself again in the plot of Guntarith, who slew the Roman

commander, Ariobindeus, and himself ruled Africa until his own assassination by Roman officers.

To this unreliability of the Vandals must be added the rivalries among the native tribes and their own capacity for deceit. The rival chieftains, Antalas and Cusina, involved themselves on opposite sides of the intrigues of Sergius and Ariobindeus and, in the course of several Roman campaigns in Africa, changed their loyalties, appearing now as a Roman ally, now as an enemy. Antalas himself boasts of his former service to the empire and gives as his reason for his rebellion the poor treatment he received in spite of that service (*Ioh.* 4.358-372). Given the size of the native forces, it was necessary for the Romans to exploit these rivalries and to enter into pacts with the various tribes, as John did with the Astrices, a people through whose lands he had to pass in the course of the second campaign (*Ioh.* 6.391-407). This strategy was not, however, without peril. First, the natives were not entirely reliable, especially when Roman fortune in battle waned, and, more serious still, there was a constant threat of dissension among native allies. At a crucial point in John's second campaign, for instance, an argument arose between Cusina and another chieftain named Ifisdaias. It posed a serious threat to the Romans and delayed their attack until a mediator was able to reconcile the natives' differences (*Ioh.* 7.242-261).

Already plagued by the unreliability of the Vandals and by the shifting loyalties and jealousies of the natives, the Roman commanders were also dogged by the unsteadiness of their own expeditionary force, which was drawn from many other parts of the empire and especially from Macedonia and Asia Minor. The adventures of the Roman rebel Stutias and his band of followers were a serious factor in the African military situation for ten years. Nor did John's army display unswerving loyalty. The pressures of the second campaign in the south twice provoked dissension in his ranks. On the second occasion a serious mutiny erupted and John was forced to use his native allies to quell it. Although an open battle between the



allies and the mutinous Romans was averted, a number of the ring-leaders had, in fact, to be executed (*Ioh.* 8.49-163).

To these difficulties must be added the strangeness of the tactics employed by the African tribes. John speaks to his own army at length about the kind of guerilla warfare they employ and stresses the fact that it is unfamiliar to the Romans and therefore especially dangerous (*Ioh.* 1.522-559). The natives made every use of the terrain and their own superior numbers. It was their custom to keep their main force in hiding in the mountains and to send a single soldier or a small band forward to lure the Romans away from the fields on which their formations and tactics gave them an advantage. The decoys would then attempt to scatter the Roman pursuers, at the same time leading them into the ambushes which their waiting comrades had prepared. The main native force would then strike suddenly, hoping to overwhelm the Romans in their surprise and confusion. To the natural obstacles which the land itself offered they added barriers provided by their cattle, which they tied together in order to form animal barricades. These tactics, strange to the Romans, were very effective, as the ill-starred encounter at Gallica demonstrates (*Ioh.* 6.492ff.).

The near catastrophe at Gallica also illustrates the effects of the last two factors that complicated the Roman situation in Africa: the land and the climate. The battle at Gallica was, as we have seen, probably fought in the summer, and the natives took every advantage of the season. They deliberately lured the Roman army further and further south in the hope that the intense heat would weaken the soldiers' will. To a degree this strategy succeeded, for the intolerable heat was one of the reasons for the Roman mutiny. The desolation of the land itself was also a factor, for the terrain offered the army little to eat or drink.<sup>55</sup> Of course, although the natives had a clear advantage in their ability to endure the heat, the lack of food and drink took its toll on both sides. The Africans were able, however, to nourish themselves

by consuming their herds, while the Romans were forced to employ a more difficult, if more permanent solution, the shipping of supplies both by sea and overland from the rich farmlands to the north. In the end this strategy gave the Romans a staying power which exceeded that of the natives, who were eventually driven to face John and his army on terrain which he had chosen (*Ioh.* 8.164-179).

The imperial response to this complex situation in Africa took three forms: vigorous and effective leadership, the development of alliances and an appeal to the self-interest of the empire's natural supporters. The first of these responses, the appointment of able commanders, was an obvious necessity. The earlier despatch of Belisarius to Africa on two occasions demonstrates the efficacy of such action. And indeed the political and military situation called once again, as John assumed command, for the attention of an extraordinary leader, for when such leadership had been lacking, as, for example, in the days of Solomon and Sergius, chaos and defeat had resulted. Corippus takes great pains in his first book to describe the deliberation of Justinian as he made his choice of a commander (*Ioh.* 1.48-109). The qualities of John Troglyta as manifested by his successes in Persia were, he points out, precisely those required by the delicate situation in Africa: firmness, sound strategical and tactical judgment and the ability to act swiftly and effectively. While it is no doubt true that Corippus intentionally cast his hero in the best possible light, these qualities of leadership must have been, at least in part, responsible for the Roman successes in these campaigns.

The role of the commander in Africa was not, however, entirely military. As we have seen, the superior numbers of the native tribes required that the Romans attempt to divide them by playing upon their mutual hatreds and suspicions. Having done that, it was necessary as well to enter into a series of alliances with the disaffected tribes. In all of this the most compelling argument would be the promise of freedom from Roman attack as well as the assistance of the imperial forces in their



struggles against tribal enemies. Beyond that there lay the hope of spoils after the battle. In the long run, however, it seems that the empire itself was the strongest argument for alliance with the Roman forces. First, the chieftains might be paid for their allegiance. In addition, they and their henchmen might be given special status in the imperial military hierarchy through the conferral of Roman titles. The idea of being Roman, of being part of that vast and powerful world state is prominent in Corippus' text and must have been a part of the broad imperial strategy that looked toward incorporating the native African warriors into the Emperor's far-flung fighting force. There is, in short, a pervasive didactic tone in Corippus' poem which harps upon the concepts of *fides* and *imperium* and upon the Vergilian distinction between *subiecti* and *superbi*. The poet suggests in this way that it is the very idea of the imperial *oikoumene* and its law which the Roman army and its allies must extend (*Ioh.* 1.148-149, 2.374-388, 6.391-407).

If the idea of the empire and the benefits it was able to confer had to be impressed upon the native African warriors in a simple and direct way that involved not only wealth but power and status as well, it had also to be kept alive and meaningful in the minds of the Roman supporters on the farms and in the cities of Africa. This required the introduction of more sophisticated and subtle concepts of an economic, legal and religious character.

The economic arguments for empire are frequently employed by Corippus, especially in a negative form. The behavior of the native tribes is vividly described and given as an example of how such rebellion brings economic chaos. Wherever they attack, the natives burn the crops and the land, steal cattle, destroy homes and farms and carry off the inhabitants as hostages. The immediate cost, both economic and human, is presented as staggering enough, but an even more compelling argument is made by implication. The contrast between these descriptions of native behavior and the descriptions of peaceful economic life under orderly rule suggest

a deeper problem: the fact that the border tribes cannot or will not grasp the basic notion of mercantile life within a world state such as the empire. The idea of value in goods and produce beyond their value in immediate use or consumption seems difficult for them to grasp and so, it is suggested, they wreak havoc whenever they intrude upon societies which have embraced a sophisticated commercial system and the values it assumes.

What is more, the kind of economic system exemplified by the empire must, it is suggested, be based upon law and so, quite logically, the Roman appeal to its supporters was founded, as Roman arguments for empire had been for centuries, upon the role of Rome as lawgiver. In Corippus' text this argument is embodied in the contrast between the apparent rationality of the Romans and the apparent frenzied and irrational behavior of the natives. Even in battle the Roman strategy is presented as reasoned, whereas the rebel leaders seem to act on impulse most of the time. And Roman rationality, which is seen as the basis of law and order, is complemented by Roman humanitarian feeling. This benign sensibility is a common characteristic of Corippus' Roman leaders. John worries a great deal, for example, about the fate and welfare of those who have been taken hostage by the enemy and makes every attempt as he goes into battle to spare them suffering. In short, we are given to believe that there exists among the Romans a respect for reason, law and human feeling which results in adherence to certain customary rules of decent behavior in both war and peace. This is boldly contrasted with the perceived wanton behavior of the native tribes, and this contrast was surely not lost on the farmers and urban dwellers of the African provinces.<sup>56</sup>

Both the humanitarian sensibility and the respect for the law which forms a great part of Corippus' justification of the empire and its designs are related to the final and perhaps most powerful argument for Roman rule: the religious argument. The empire is presented as the protector and disseminator of religious orthodoxy.



The Emperor himself is seen as the vice-regent of Christ, and the divinity is in turn the protector of the imperial cause. In the last analysis, therefore, the Roman commander is both evangelical and ecclesiastical in that he brings to a backward people the religion which will provide it with eternal salvation. And so Corippus stresses the modernity not only of the economic and political vision of the empire but of its religious message as well. We find in his text, for example, descriptions of native rites, all of which are characterized as dark, superstitious, irrational and bloody. Beside these the poet places examples of Christian prayer and liturgy which, as we shall see, are always pictured as enlightened and modern. In the end, this religious motive becomes dominant in the argument for Roman rule. Christianity is seen, as it was to be in later centuries, as the final reason for the existence of the imperial *oikoumene* with its economic, legal and political structures. It is the final embodiment of reason and revelation and of enlightened humanitarianism. In view of this, Corippus, the imperial poet, concludes that attempts to stand outside this *oikoumene* and to remain free are clearly perverse.<sup>57</sup>

#### Adaptation of Classical Rhetorical Techniques

The consideration of Corippus' description of Roman strategy in Africa in the sixth century, also raises the question of how he attempted to legitimize that strategy. In short, what rhetorical tools did he employ to supply his imperial patrons with the propaganda that would support their reconquest of the provinces and domination of the native tribes? To a large extent, those tools lay ready at hand in his classical models, for the economic and political arguments for the Roman world order, for a *pax Romana*, had been made with great eloquence by many earlier authors, among them Cicero and Vergil.<sup>58</sup> Since Corippus' imitation of these earlier authors has already been studied, there is no need to examine further what was in fact a rather straightforward borrowing of both the substance of earlier arguments and the means

for expressing them. This is not, however, true of what we found to be the final imperial argument for rule, that based upon religion. Here Corippus was faced with a far more challenging problem, for the religion which underpins his argumentation, Christianity, was radically different from the Graeco-Roman mythic sensibility which was essential to classical epic and to the poesis of Corippus' greatest model, Vergil. This problem was, of course, similar to that faced by all of the early Christian poets who looked to classical models and worked in genres that relied heavily upon mythological *topoi* and devices.<sup>59</sup> Corippus' challenge was, however, complicated by two factors: the importance of gaining the approval of his patrons and, one imagines, of the Emperor, who saw himself as the protector of the Christian Church, and the special need to contrast Christian religious sensibility and practice with that of the natives of Africa. This would require a careful adaptation of classical techniques on the one hand and a shrewd juxtaposition of images and narratives on the other: an undertaking worthy of further consideration.

Examination of Corippus' text from this perspective reveals that he applied to the rhetoric of religion a set of rules that are relatively easy to discern. It is clear, for example, that three epic devices are, except where native cults are described, always Christianized. These are prayer, ritual and supernatural or preternatural intervention in human affairs. The first member of this triad, prayer, can itself be divided into two categories: prayers of praise and prayers of supplication, both of which are usually brief and Christian in tone. Consider first the prayer found in the account of John Troglyta's victories in Persia, which are reviewed by the Emperor in the first book of the poem. In that account one of the Emperor's courtiers, after witnessing the victory, prays in the following manner:

extendens geminas pariter cum lumine palmas  
ad caelum sic laetus ait: "tibi gloria semper,  
summe deus, victos tandem post tempora Persas



cernere quod merui nostri virtute Iohannis."  
Ioh. 1.106-109

There is little tension between the Christian and classical rhetoric here. The attitude of prayer, the vocabulary and the idea of thanking the divinity for victory are common to both traditions, although the idea contained in the phrase "cernere...merui" seems more Christian than classical.<sup>60</sup>

There is greater tension, however, in the longer prayer of supplication which occurs later in the same book. The hero's fleet is caught by a storm and in that dire circumstance John, like Aeneas, utters a prayer.

"omnipotens verbi genitor rerumque creator,  
principium sine fine, deus, te cuncta fatentur  
auctorem et dominum, factorem elementa tremescunt.  
te venti nubesque pavent, tibi militat aer,  
imperioque tuo nunc arduus intonat aether  
magnaue concussi turbatur machina mundi.  
tu scis, summe pater, tu praescius omnia nosti:  
non auris cupidus, non ullo munere lucri  
in Libyam compulsus eo, sed scindere bellum  
et miseras salvare animas. haec sola cupido,  
hic animis amor omnis inest, huc iussio tantum  
principis alma trahit, noster te principe princeps  
imperat. ipse tibi meritum debere fatetur  
ordine servitium; tu illi nos subicis omnes  
et servire iubes; tua sum praecepta secutus.  
aspice, sancte, favens et nostros cerne labores.  
iam placidus, tantaeque pius succurre ruinae.  
sin sua peccantem damnent delicta Iohannem  
iudice te, quocumque alio me comprime leto,  
pro Petro nunc parce meo."  
Ioh. 1.286-305

The structure of the prayer is easily discernible, but in its various parts there is a subtle interweaving of pagan and Christian themes. It begins with a list of divine

titles, a device common to both traditions. The titles themselves, however, suggest a mingling of sources. God may be *omnipotens* for earlier Latin poets,<sup>61</sup> but he is not *creator* as here. His command of the elements is, on the other hand, a common device which occurs both in the Prayer to Manassas (1-5), which was in use for liturgical psalmody in the fifth century,<sup>62</sup> and also in the first book of the *Aeneid*, 65-66 and 133ff. Several phrases in this description of nature's obedience to God are echoes of earlier Latin poets: "arduous...aether" (*Georgics* 1.325) and "machina mundi" (Lucretius 5.95) for example. In the next section of the prayer Corippus treats the relationship of his hero to God. This relationship is approached in two ways. First, God's omnipotence is stressed, the fact that he knows what the hero is doing and that his motives are good, and second, God's ultimate responsibility for the hero's action is alluded to. Since he is acting under the commands of the Emperor, John is in fact carrying out the will of God. In these lines, as he explains the relationship of the Emperor to the Christian God, Corippus once again calls upon both traditions. The Emperor is still *princeps* as in earlier centuries, but he is, as John states, "te principe princeps" or God's vice-regent on earth who is responsible for carrying out divine commands.<sup>63</sup> In the final section of the prayer the hero's request is made. Here the epithets change and suggest not the power of God but his mercy and gentleness: *sancte, favens, placidus, pius*. The conclusion is almost entirely Christian, for the tone is one of penitence and charity.<sup>64</sup> The hero admits that he may be guilty in the eyes of God and therefore accepts his own punishment, but he begs for the life of his innocent son. It is interesting to note that in the same situation Aeneas' thoughts were of the past, of the glory he had lost by not giving up his life at Troy. Characteristically, the Christian hero's thoughts are not of past glory lost but of the future, his own reconciliation with God and his descendent's survival.

Corippus also had to decide whether and how he would describe Christian ritual, which, it will be recalled, he would want to contrast with the ceremonies of the



native tribes. Certainly his model, Vergil, had taken great pains to describe ritual accurately.<sup>65</sup> Would Corippus do likewise? The answer to this question may be found in two passages in which the hero of the poem participates in what is clearly a religious rite. The first and shorter one occurs after the first victory of the Romans. After his return to Carthage, John visits the cathedral church there. Here is a description of the event:

sub limina templi  
magnanimus ductor signis comitantibus intrans  
oravit dominum caeli terraeque marisque,  
obtulit et munus, summus quod more sacerdos  
pro redituque ducis pro victisque hostibus arae  
impósuit, Christoque pater libamina sanxit.  
Ioh. 6.98-103

Here too Corippus appears to be torn between his desire to describe an act of Christian worship and his wish to remain close to the diction of earlier Latin verse. The vocabulary is Vergilian: *templum*, *sacerdos*, *munus*, *libamen*, and this, along with the brevity of the description, makes it difficult to ascertain the nature of the ceremony. One would expect, in the context of classical poetry, that the *munus* brought by the conquering hero would be the spoils of war, but the *summus sacerdos*, probably a bishop, places the *munus* on the altar *more*, in the prescribed fashion, and consecrates it to Christ: "*Christoque...sanxit*," both of which acts suggest that the *munus* is the bread and wine for the Eucharistic ceremony.

The second description of a religious ceremony (Ioh. 8.318-369) is longer but somewhat unclear because of the lacuna at the end of the passage. In this case the description opens with the preparation of the site for the ritual. The standards of the army are brought forward, and a temporary altar is set up in the middle of the camp and hung with sacred draperies. A choir is formed and the ceremony begins. It can be divided into five parts: the singing of hymns by the choir and by those referred to

as *ministri*, the entrance of the general and the peoples' prayers for forgiveness, the offering of the *munus* which is found *acceptibile* and finally, the beginning of the consecration. Here again there is an attempt to maintain the classical diction, but the sequence of events and the fact that we are told that the event takes place on the Lord's Day make it almost certain that a Mass is being celebrated.<sup>66</sup>

The intervention of divine power in human affairs is, of course, common in earlier epic poetry. In both Homer and Vergil narrative moves on two levels, the human and the divine, and divine will is considered the final cause of human events. This convention posed little problem for Corippus, for the Christian view of history resembled the earlier classical view in that it too attributed to divine power the final governance of the universe and all that it contained. It was, therefore, relatively easy for him to adapt the older diction to his own purposes. Victories are won *favente deo* (Ioh. 3.299) and defeats suffered *irascente deo* (Ioh. 3.457). And the leaders of the Roman army acknowledge explicitly their total dependence upon God. When the Emperor sends John to Africa, he says:

cetera Christus agat, noster dominusque deusque  
in melius referens, et te per cuncta gubernet  
prosperitate sua.

Ioh. 1.151-153

After a defeat John himself reflects upon the wisdom of the Old Testament text: "*vana est hominum vigilantia certe/ non vigilante deo*." (Ioh. 7.38-39).<sup>67</sup> Divine intervention is also emphasized at the conclusion of prayers and so, when the hero prays for aid in the storm at sea, we are told:

talibus orantis fletus et verba recepit  
suscipiens dominus: validis mitiscere ventis  
imperat...

Ioh. 1.310-312



And finally, when John prays for help after the defeat at Gallica, we are told that God grants it:

hic pater omnipotens, lacrimae et verba dolentis  
suscipiens, Latias voluit revalescere vires  
Ioh. 7.107-108

The question of how to treat supernatural apparitions posed a greater problem for Corippus, however. The appearance of divinities themselves are frequent in classical epic, but in Corippus' age the divine inspiration of individuals and prophecy were looked upon as suspicious.<sup>68</sup> The appearance of the divinity Himself as a mere rhetorical device might, therefore, have appeared sacrilegious and Corippus avoids it. There is, however, a curious apparition in the first book of the poem. It includes the appearance of a fallen angel and then, it seems, of the hero's dead father. Whether these creatures appear in a dream we cannot tell. About twelve lines before the apparition John is in fact asleep, but within those lines his fleet sets sail, and it seems probable that he was roused for that event. In any case, whether a dream or a waking vision, the fallen angel makes his appearance as the fleet approaches Africa. He is referred to as a *tristis imago* (Ioh. 1.243,) and he is described in a way that suggests that he is akin to John's enemies, the African natives. Darkness characterizes both. The spirit is called *cognata tenebris* (Ioh. 1.244), and the dark skin of the natives is stressed in the poem and made a symbol of their depravity. As the apparition unfolds, the images of darkness grow stronger as does the association with the natives: "*Maura videbatur facies nigroque colore*" (Ioh. 1.245). Finally the spirit threatens the general, "*horrida sulphureis contorquens lumina monstribus*" (Ioh. 1.251) and forbids him to land in Africa. John, however, recognizes the vision for what it is: "*angelus deiectus Olympo*" (Ioh. 1.253) and pursues the creature, who flees, scattering dark shadows and dust behind him. Then the second apparition

appears: "*aspectu placidus senior descendit Olympo, / candida sidereis gestans velamina peplis*" (Ioh. 1.259-260). We are not told explicitly who this *senior* is. He directs the general to ignore the fallen angel and to continue his voyage. John refers to him simply as *pater optime* (Ioh. 1.265) and *vir dei* (Ioh. 1.266). These appellations and the absence of any further identification suggest that the figure is the hero's own father, who Corippus himself tells us (Ioh. 8.576) is dead. The title *vir dei* presents some small problem, suggesting as it does that the figure had been a cleric. It is possible, however, that John's father embraced a religious or ascetic vocation late in life.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this passage is the use of black and white, clearly racial here, to symbolize evil and good. The fallen angel is black and, like the black natives, opposes the kingdom of God and the empire. Both bring darkness and confusion to the world. The saintly father, however, is *placidus* and *candidus*. He represents peace and the mission of enlightenment which belongs to the Church and the empire. In fact, this stark contrast, bluntly stated here in terms of color, will be emphasized as the narrative unfolds, especially in Corippus' description of the native rituals.

As far as Graeco-Roman myth is concerned, no single rule governed Corippus' decisions about what to retain and what to discard from classical epic diction. There are, however, a number of circumstances in which mythological references are generally permitted. The most prominent of these involve the use of mythological imagery in similes where it is clear that a literary and not a theological effect is desired. For example, in describing the burning cities of Africa, Corippus writes:

haud aliter Phaethon cunctis e partibus orbis  
non bene concesso succenderat omnia curru  
flammivomis raptatus equis, ni fulmine summo



omnipotens genitor terras miseratus anhelos  
 disiunxisset equos, restingens ignibus ignem.  
*Ioh.* 1.336.340

There is no theological difficulty here; the author is simply imitating earlier Latin poets in employing a well-known picture from Graeco-Roman mythology<sup>69</sup> in order to decorate his poem. At times Corippus introduces such passages with the parenthetical *ut ferunt, ut aiunt* or *fertur*, but it is unlikely that he felt compelled to do this for theological reasons, for this stylistic practice can be traced back to classical Latin verse.<sup>70</sup>

The Graeco-Roman divinities also appear as personifications of cosmic and supernatural power. Thus the sea is *Thetis* (*Ioh.* 1.130), heaven is *Olympus* (*Ioh.* 1.259), the sun is *Phoebus* (*Ioh.* 2.157), the moon *Cynthia* (*Ioh.* 2.418), the crops *Ceres* (*Ioh.* 3.324) and wine *Bacchus* (*Ioh.* 7.70). These names, like that of *Mars* which appears throughout the poem for war, posed no problem for the poet. They had been so extensively used in classical epic that they had virtually become synonyms for the terms to which they referred. What is more, Corippus had before him the example of the Stoics who had long ago accepted the Graeco-Roman pantheon as poetic symbols for many aspects and processes of the cosmos.

The question of whether to use mythological imagery was not always quite so simple, however. There are a number of cases where Corippus had a clear alternative but chose a classical reference instead of a Christian one. His source of inspiration is, for example, always the *Musae* or *Camenae* (*Ioh.* praef. 28 and 37, 1.8, 3.334-335). Unlike Milton, he adds no reference to the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup> The Furies not the Devil and his followers are similarly employed to signify the powers that drive men to madness and violence (*Ioh.* 3.36-37, 5.34, 8.136). Corippus chose this representation of the source of irrational and violent behavior in spite of the fact that a fallen angel does, as we have seen, make an appearance in the first book of the epic.

There, however, the apparition is part of an elaborate scene which juxtaposes the diabolic vision with the apparition of a saint. Furthermore, the poet's intention in that passage was in fact to reject irrational behavior and to affirm the superiority of reason based on faith.<sup>72</sup>

Among the classical images of cosmic power we find, in the place of the Christian God Himself, the use of Jupiter as sky and rain god (*Ioh.* 5.395-397), a somewhat surprising device since we have also found explicit references to the Christian God's power over the elements. We can only conclude that Corippus, like other Christian poets,<sup>73</sup> felt comfortable with the use of certain classical terms even in the place of readily available Christian terminology. In much the same way, he describes death and the dead with phrases like *ire sub umbras* (*Ioh.* 1.488), *annus/miscuerat superis manes* (*Ioh.* 3.347-348) and *mittat ad umbras* (*Ioh.* 5.264, 7.429). Here, as in the case of Hell which is referred to as *Stygias undas* (*Ioh.* 1.401), *Tartara* (*Ioh.* 4.213) or *Orcus* (*Ioh.* 6.12), the poet chooses Vergilian diction (e.g. *Aen.* 3.215, 4.660, 6.358, 7.773, 9.91) and lets it stand for the Christian concept.

Finally we ought to consider Corippus' use of *fatum*, *fortuna* and *sors*, three terms which he employs interchangeably for fate. This idea, which is central to classical epic, might have posed a problem for a Christian author for, as we have seen, Corippus clearly acknowledges the existence of divine omniscience and providence. What then would he make of *fatum*? If we examine his use of this word, we find that he uses it almost exclusively of evil occurrences. It is, of course, used of death for which it had earlier become a virtual synonym,<sup>74</sup> but is also used of civil strife (*Ioh.* 3.155). It would appear, then, that Corippus used the classical term to describe the cause of evil events. One might argue that this practice suggests a dualistic vision of causation, but the traditional association of *fatum* with death goes a long way toward explaining Corippus' choice of the term.



The poetic tension in our text between classical rhetoric and Christian theology is a chapter in the evolution of Christian stylistics. It is of interest because it gives us an insight into the manner in which poets of the age chose between rigid theological orthodoxy and the powerful mythopoetic tools which classical poets had employed in earlier ages. In the case of Corippus it is perhaps of interest for another related reason as well. Corippus, in his role as apologist for the Roman and Christian Emperor must have understood the need to present both aspects of the imperial system, Roman and Christian, as part of a single and coherent vision. The assimilation of Graeco-Roman diction to Christian theology looks toward what would be the dominant Christian view of Greek and Roman antiquity: that many of its finer intellectual achievements foreshadowed the revelation achieved in Christ. Corippus' stylistic practice is, therefore, more than just a question of poetics; it reveals an historical sensibility as well, a sensibility which was well suited to the objectives he had to achieve as imperial propagandist.

Nowhere does he pursue those objectives more resolutely, however, than in his description of the native African religion and in the contrast which he draws between it and the imperial Christian sensibility and religious practice. Foremost among the native divinities he describes is Ammon, whose shrine was at Siwa near Cyrene and who was regarded by earlier Greeks as a god of prophecy, represented in the form a horned Zeus. Several pilgrimages to his shrine are made by the Africans in the poem, the first, by Guenfan, the father of Antalas, who makes sacrifices to Jupiter himself and: "*tristes et Apollonis aras/ inde petens Phoebi tripodas laurusque requirit.*" (Ioh. 3.84-85). The second pilgrimage is made by Carcasan, the leader of the second uprising John faced, and it clarifies the relationship between Jupiter and Ammon. Corippus notes that: "*Marmaridum fines, habitat quo corniger Ammon,/ inde petit, durique Iovis responsa poposcit.*" (Ioh. 6.147-148), which suggests that prophetic messages came from Jupiter but through the

god Ammon. Ammon is for the natives, it seems, similar to Apollo in that he makes Jupiter's will known to mankind.

Next in importance is the native god Gurzil. Ierna, the chieftain of the Ilaguas, one of the Srytic tribes, is said to be his priest (Ioh. 2.109) and the god himself is, we are informed, the son of Ammon and a heifer (Ioh. 2.110-111). Gurzil actually accompanies the Africans into battle and is prayed to during the combat (Ioh. 5.39). Indeed Ierna launches a curious image of him against the Roman lines in a manner left somewhat unclear by Corippus' text:

cum \*\*\* magica taurus dimittitur arte  
Maurorum e medio, taurus quem Ierna sacerdos  
atque idem gentis rectorum maximus auctor  
finxerat Ammonii signantem numina Gurzil,  
omina prima suis. celsis tunc cornibus ille  
inter utrosque furit, dubius qua rumperet hostes  
Ioh. 5.22-27

Later, when Ierna flees from the battlefield he takes this strange object with him: "*simulacra sui secum tulit horrida Gurzil*" (Ioh. 5.495). Although it is somewhat difficult to understand exactly what sort of icon we are dealing with here, it seems that Ierna in some way fits an image to a bull which he then launches from his lines to arouse his own men's courage and to terrify the enemy lines through which it tries to break. This explanation does not, however, entirely explain the term *magica arte*, and we cannot rule out some crude kind of self-propelled vehicle guided by one of Ierna's men.

Two other divinities are mentioned by Corippus as well: Siniifer "*quem Mazax numina Martis/ accipit atque deum belli putat esse potentem*" (Ioh. 8.305-306) and Mastiman<sup>75</sup> who is referred to as Taenarian Jupiter and to whom human victims are said to be sacrificed. The title Taenarian as well as the reference to human sacrifice



suggest that he may be a god of the underworld, a hypothesis supported by Corippus' grim description of his ritual:

Taenarium dixere Iovem, cui sanguine multo  
humani generis mactatur victima pesti.  
pro scelus infaustum! gemitus miserabilis, auras  
undique concutiens, clamoribus aethera pulsat.  
imprimit hic ferrum iugulis et vocibus ipsum  
numen agit dubias vocans exire per umbras  
solis iter temptare iubet. tunc more profano  
diripiunt pecudum fibras et fata requirunt.

*Ioh.* 8.308-315

Corippus' fullest description of an African ritual occurs when Guenfan, the father of Antalas, visits the shrine of Ammon to consult its priestess about his son's destiny. The passage is too long for quotation but the parts of the ritual are clear. It begins (*Ioh.* 3861) with the approach of the suppliant to the temple and with his killing of the sacrificial victims, referred to as the *horrida sacra* (*Ioh.* 3.84). Guenfan then enters the temple where the *vittata sacerdos* likewise sacrifices *omnigenum pecus* (*Ioh.* 3.87). She then examines the entrails and places them on the altar. At this point her seduction by the god begins with, in fact, an act of self-immolation, for she takes a knife from the altar and stabs herself with it (*Ioh.* 3.92-93). Then, bleeding profusely, she grows frenzied, her hair stands on end and her eyes roll about as she begins to leap up and down. Finally her face grows red, a sure sign, Corippus comments, of the god's power (*Ioh.* 3.98). There follows a stage in the ceremony in which the priestess is incoherent. She moans, gasps and utters indistinguishable sounds. This state passes, however, and she then utters a prophecy which is both understandable and complete (*Ioh.* 3.107-140). It contains not only facts welcome to the natives but also an account of their eventual defeat. Most remarkably, it also contains a prediction and endorsement of the Christian conversion of Africa (*Ioh.*

3.125-126). The scene ends with the collapse of the priestess (*Ioh.* 3.141) and an elaborate description of the gruesome sounds which course through her exhausted body.

The same oracle is consulted later in the poem by the chieftain Carcasan, the leader of the second uprising (*Ioh.* 6.145-176). The description of this event corresponds in general to the description of the earlier consultation by Guenfan. Here we are told that a bull is sacrificed, that the priestess uses a *tympana* in her dance and that the prophecy is given at night. The incoherent raving is omitted and the prophecy is given at once without any preparatory self-immolation. The greatest difference between the two descriptions lies, however, in her manner of her prophecy which in this case renders her message ambiguous and misleading. She predicts that the natives will hold the fields of Africa forever, that there will be peace, that Carcasan will enter Carthage and be marvelled at and finally that he will subdue nations. The prophecy is similar to that received by Gyges at Delphi centuries earlier. Corippus explains that the Africans will in fact be buried in the land, that Carcasan will be led into Carthage as a prisoner and beheaded and that Rome will impose peace on the conquered native nations (*Ioh.* 6.177-187).

What rhetorical strategy has Corippus employed in these passages to draw a contrast between imperial rationality and benevolence and what he saw as the frenzied cruelty of the African natives? First, it should be noted that he does not hesitate to identify some of the native divinities with their Graeco-Roman counterparts. This syncretic practice had, of course, a long history in antiquity and may, in some cases, reflect religious commonalities and links. Corippus' rhetorical use of this identification seems at first somewhat strange, however, since we have already noticed that he employed the diction of myth in a manner which suggests that he wanted to present both the Graeco-Roman and Christian visions of reality as part of an evolving but coherent historical and intellectual process. What are we to make



of this? Examining the passages above again, we find that Corippus has in fact made a distinction between two kinds of pagan sensibility and practice. The more enlightened examples of these are viewed as anticipations of Christian revelation and practice and are therefore employed rhetorically to give his own poetic apology grace and power. The darker aspects of that religious practice are in fact transferred to the practice of the native Africans and made the basis for the indictment of their irrational and inhumane behavior. So it is that the passages cited above stress three characteristics of the native cults, all of which have grim parallels in earlier Greek and Roman religious practice: bloody and violent sacrifice, sometimes human, ecstatic possession by a divinity and the individual possession of powers of divination and prophecy. All of these ran counter to the spirit of the Christian community and hence are highlighted as hallmarks of native depravity and presented in the most unattractive manner.

Furthermore, Corippus goes beyond this kind of indirect rhetorical implication in his construction of the contrast of sensibilities. From time to time he mocks the native cult directly. Of Gurzil's lineage he says: "*tanta est insania caecis/mentibus! ah, miseras fallunt sic numina gentes* (Ioh. 2.111.112). The theme of falsehood and deception is here made explicit as it is in the recounting of the second prophecy to Carcasan: "*semper amat miseras deceptor fallere mentes/ Iuppiter hic quem, vane, rogas*" (Ioh. 6.149-150). In view of these statements, what is particularly remarkable is the fact that Corippus puts his own view of the future of African religion in the mouth of the native priestess who says: "*Africa namque suum factorem fessa rogabit/ quem colit ipsa deum, quem fas cognoscere dignos.*" (Ioh. 3.125-126).

Corippus is no less direct in his statement of the other side of this contrast: the nature of the Christian message and mission and the role it plays in the motivation of the Roman leaders. In this connection it is not inappropriate to close

this section of the introduction with John Troglyta's statement of the reason for his conquest, contained in a prayer quoted above:

non auri cupidus: non ullo munere lucri,  
in Libyam compulsus eo, sed scindere bellum  
et miseras salvare animas. haec sola cupido  
hic animis amor omnis inest, huc iussio tantum  
principis alma trahit. noster te principe princeps  
imperat. ipse tibi meritum debere fatetur  
ordine servitium; tu illi subicis omnes  
et servire iubes; tua sum praecepta secutus.

Ioh. 1.293-300

### Corippus' Poetic Achievement

Having considered the imperial arguments for the conquest of Africa and Corippus' treatment of the most powerful of those arguments, the religious one, it is appropriate to ask whether and to what degree Corippus succeeded in combining the roles of poet and apologist, roles which he shares with his model, Vergil. The answer to this question lies in the manner in which he employed the rhetorical tools which the epic tradition placed at his disposal. Hence we need to examine his text to determine whether he was simply "making verse" to please a patron seeking a propagandist or, whether he was able to go beyond the imperatives which patronage imposed and inform his work with an authentic poetic sensibility and vision.

If one begins with the most rudimentary components of poetic style, an author's use of words and linguistic structures, Corippus must be awarded reasonably high honors, for there are comparatively few indications of hasty composition in his text. Nor was he ignorant of the linguistic and literary tradition within which he was working. Corippus' Latinity was carefully studied by Welzel early in the twentieth century<sup>76</sup> and although he was able to compile an impressive list of morphological and syntactical anomalies, he found relatively few usages which cannot be found in



the diction of earlier poets or in the works of other late Latin authors. Centuries earlier, for example, Vergil had employed the dative case to indicate movement to a destination in the place of an accusative: "*it clamor caelo*" (*Aen.* 5.451) and "*ruit Oceano nox*" (*Aen.* 2.250), the conjunctions *quamquam* and *quamvis* in adversative clauses were confused even in the classical period<sup>77</sup> and the graphic form for expressing indirect discourse in place of the infinitive had become fairly common by Corippus' age.<sup>78</sup> These usages along with the use of the infinitive or the future participle to express intention are not unique to our author and do not, therefore, constitute grounds for impugning his skill or carefulness in composition.

Admittedly, some confusion of words does occur in his text as Appel has noted<sup>79</sup>: *quisque* for *quisquis* (*Ioh.* 2.478), *totus* for *omnis* (*Ioh.* 1.553), *quisquis* for *quisquam* (*Ioh.* 1.33-34); and there are some irregularities in the use of compound verbs and the comparatives and superlatives of adjectives: *currere* for *percurrere* (*Ioh.* 4.341), *mittere* for *committere* (*Ioh.* 1.487-488), *magis certius* (*Ioh.* 7.539) and *proximior* (*Ioh.* 7.421 and 8.11). These irregularities are relatively few in number, however, and Appel often seems overzealous in his compilation. Indeed, not infrequently Corippus appears to distort syntax deliberately for a rhetorical effect, a practice which scarcely provides grounds for a charge of excessively mechanical or hasty versification.

A more subtle indicator of a poet's skill may be found in his control and use of sound and metrical patterns. Here, an examination of our poet's manipulation of the dactylic hexameter produces mixed results.<sup>80</sup> There is, for example, nothing remarkable or blameworthy in his approach to the various forms of syllabic transformation found in Latin poetry, to hiatus, aphaeresis and elision; and occurrences of phenomena like synzeesis, diaeresis, contraction and syncope are handled in much the same way his classical models handled them. Nor can we find fault with the form of his hexameter line in which one seldom finds a technical flaw.

Comparison of his metrical practice with earlier poets such as Ennius, Lucretius and Vergil reveals little that is strikingly different or new. He has an aversion, it is true, to the self-contained spondaic first foot and his main caesura, generally masculine, is not infrequently postponed to the fourth foot, so that the bucolic diaeresis occurs less frequently than in Lucretius or Vergil. In the last two feet of his hexameter one always finds coincidence of ictus and stress, and Corippus never experiments with special effects at the end of the line by inserting pentasyllabic, quadrisyllabic or monosyllabic words.

As this brief review of Corippus' approach to the hexameter suggests, it is not technical skill that our poet lacks. One does find, however, a lack of imagination and originality, as an examination of his skill in varying the metrical scheme will reveal. Although less than three percent of his lines lack spondaic substitutions and hence variety, Corippus not infrequently repeats the same metrical pattern in two, three or even four successive lines. Here, for example, are four lines in which spondees are monotonously repeated in the third and fourth feet:

innumerasque acies Maurorum in proelia ductor  
Cusinus fidus agit. commotis omnia cannis  
arva gemunt: solidant latos vestigia campos  
ille duces proprios triginta fortior armat;  
*Ioh.* 7.263-266

The most damning evidence, however, is found in his seeming unconcern with the relation between the metrical pace and the narrative content of given lines. For example, rapid dactylic lines are used to describe: Sleeping soldiers struggling in their dreams:

corpora dormit iners, animo tamen ille laborat  
*Ioh.* 2.459



The grief of a dying man:

interea Stultias anima fugiente dolebat:  
Ioh. 4.205

A dense and entangled grove:

densum nemus impedit arma  
frondibus implicitis: steriles tenuere myricae  
Ioh. 6.571-572

On the other hand, heavy spondaic lines are used to describe:

A commander leaping up for joy:

assurgit laetus magno clamore magi  
Ioh. 5.190

Smoke and ashes floating upward:

fumum atrum primum parvamque exire favillam  
saepe vides  
Ioh. 8.73-74

This apparent lack of sensitivity is especially disappointing, for in other ways, for example in the handling of figures of sound like assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia, Corippus often seems far more sophisticated. Consider, for instance, the assonance in: "*alluit atque undis agros concludit amaris*" (Ioh. 6.755) and this fine description of a soldier lapping up water from a spring: "*pronus aquas alius lambit de flumine lingua*" (Ioh. 7.345). On the other hand, however, we can also find many gratuitous and rather labored sound effects. Overworked alliterations abound: "*maximus et princeps plena pietate magistrum*" (Ioh. 1.131), "*cunctaque deletis donat delicta libellis*" (Ioh. 2.362) and "*at socii petiere fugam faciemque furentis*" (Ioh. 4.170). Similarly, the use of figures like anaphora, antithesis, chiasmus and polyptoton often seem mannered and forced.

Indeed a good deal of Corippus' figurative language, not just figures of sound but figures of imagined resemblance and heightened feeling as well, suffers from this flaw. He includes in his poetic strategy devices such as exclamations (Ioh. 1.44-46 and 2.111-112), rhetorical questions (Ioh. 1.44-46) and hyperbole (Ioh. 5.48-49) but they are generally lacking in originality and disappointingly predictable. The same must be said of his uses of personification (Ioh. 1.41, 5.48-49, 6.58-59) or of synecdoche, examples of which (Ioh. 2.229-230 and 5.366) are so time-worn that they scarcely qualify as examples of figurative language at all.

It is with his use of similes that the picture brightens somewhat. There are no less than fifty-six examples of long or Homeric similes in the epic. These can be placed in four clear categories: those dealing with inanimate nature, those dealing with animals, those taken from human occupations and those drawn from mythology. The success of these figures is uneven, but Corippus does achieve a striking poetic effects in some of them. Among the similes based on nature, which employ as their vehicles objects as diverse as stars, storms and fire, there is a particularly fine one based on a storm:

sequitur tunc agmina pulvis  
significatque vias. dirupto carcere ventus  
non aliter teneras flatu convolvit harenas,  
cum tumidus Boreas, Scythica iam liber ab aula,  
perfurit in campos: turbo volat horridus ante  
contortus virtute Noti, gyroque coactus  
verrit harenosas conturbans aequora terras  
Ioh. 7.445-451

The simile is rich in detail and, although it moves far from the original image of the stirred sand, it returns gracefully to that same picture in the last line.



Similes which deal with animals are more frequent. Five describe lions (*Ioh.* 4.145, 5.232, 5.443, 6.645, 6.745), three, bees (*Ioh.* 1.430, 4.297, 7.336), the remainder, a wolf (*Ioh.* 4.353), locusts (*Ioh.* 2.196), a tigress (*Ioh.* 6.713), a bull (*Ioh.* 4.569), a crow (*Ioh.* 6.94) and a stork (*Ioh.* 8.9). Here is the long and rich simile with a tigress as its vehicle:

perfurit, et variis prosternit corpora fatis.  
mater ut Hyrcanos catulis furit orba per agros  
tigris anhela suis, raptos quos forte cubili  
Carcasio subtrahit eques - spectacula Persis  
regibus ille furens ferrata calce fatigat  
cornipedum pavidus - similis tunc illa marito  
et levior Zephyro teneros dolet aspera fetus  
atque volat: sic dux populis concurrere certat.  
*Ioh.* 6.712-719

This simile, which describes a warrior who makes his last stand surrounded by fallen comrades, is particularly apt, for it conveys both his feeling of loss and his stubborn ferocity. Furthermore, in its brief digression about the hunter's motives and manner, it suggests the cowardly wantonness of the warrior's opponents.

The similes drawn from human occupations are equally varied. They picture a farmer (*Ioh.* 2.299), musician (*Ioh.* 4.576), a woodsman (*Ioh.* 5.473) and a harvester (*Ioh.* 8.536). He also gives us a remarkably complex picture of a plumber operating a drainage ditch or waterline. It is used to describe the murmur that runs through the body of the frenzied native priestess:

sic ubi lymphigeros deducit fistula tractus  
aero cavo, liquidus cum currens funditur amnis  
rauca sonans: placitum si fluxos sistere ductus,  
obice contorto patulum celer arte magister  
obstruit amnis iter, vertex truncatur aquarum  
obicibus clausis, ad fontem refluit amnis  
et reliquus fessa transcurrit rivulus unda.  
*Ioh.* 3.145-151

The simile succeeds in spite of its complexity, which takes the reader far from the original comparison. Its success is due in part to the ingenious use of sound effects, the repetition of *ob* at the beginning of three successive lines which reinforces the image of blockage, the gurgling sound of the *u*'s and the clever return of the *amnis* at line's end as the stream itself returns to its source.

It is perhaps Corippus' mythologically based similes that are least successful. We find the expected divinities among them: Jupiter (*Ioh.* 1.451, 5.395, 6.658), Hercules (*Ioh.* 3.158 and 6.210) and Phaethon, who is employed in Corippus' description of the devastation wreaked on Africa by the natives:

haud aliter Phaethon cunctis e partibus orbis  
non bene concessio succenderat omnia curru  
flammivomis raptatus equis, ni fulmine summe  
omnipotens genitor, terras miseratur, anhelos  
disiunxisset equos, restinguens ignibus ignem.  
*Ioh.* 1.336-340

The image is not original but the simile is effective nonetheless, for Corippus has created a subtle resonance between Jupiter's saving act and the actions of Justinian and John, a resonance reinforced at the close of the figure with the polyptoton *ignibus ignem* which suggests the measured Roman use of violence to quell violence.

It should come as no surprise that questions of imitation, originality and adaptation have pervaded consideration of Corippus' style, for he was perhaps the last ancient practitioner of epic composition in a line that extends back to Homer. It was inevitable that his style would in great part be shaped by the rich tradition he inherited and that he would rely heavily upon the formal stylistic tools, upon the structures and themes that his predecessors had developed over the centuries.



One must, therefore, take care in judging Corippus' success as a poet on the basis of originality alone. For this reason, for example, it is necessary to examine critically the work of Rudolf Amman,<sup>81</sup> who has compiled a list of what he claims are imitations by Corippus. In fact, although Amman identifies many clear imitations, he is carried away by his own zeal and as a result suggests that the use of simple phrases like *flamine ventus* and *rivoque fluenti* are deliberate imitations. This kind of obsession with literary models not only sees imitation where none exists but fails as well to recognize that the diction of major canonical works makes its way into common speech. Furthermore, in the case of Corippus, who was a teacher of literature, it must certainly have been the case that he carried in his head many themes, phrases and stylistic devices used in earlier epic poetry, many of which he employed unconsciously.

Works like Amman's are useful, but it is really the nature of intertextuality in antiquity which lies at the heart of the question of imitation in an author like Corippus. As a writer of epic in the sixth century, Corippus inherited structure and diction as well as many of the thematic and figurative components of his poem. His challenge, as we have noted above, was to adapt these to a new narrative and, in his case, to a new religious, political and ethical sensibility.

With this caution in mind and having reviewed some of the facets of his poetic style, what judgement can we make about his success? On the one hand, his technical achievement is impressive. He has produced passages, as we have seen, in which he becomes mannered, labored, sometimes trite even by ancient standards, but there are others in which he has succeeded at producing wholly new literary effects, making the tradition his own and adapting it to the needs of his imperial and Christian patrons. Nevertheless, in the final analysis it must be admitted that this apologetic mission seems to have been an obstacle to his becoming a poet of the first rank. Put quite simply, his apparent certainty, his assurance, his total faith in the theological

and political systems whose cause he was asked to champion, seem to have kept him from considering the human condition in depth, from, as it were, peering into the abyss, as every great poet must.<sup>82</sup> Few poets have been able to fix their gaze on that abyss for long; fewer still, Corippus' great model Vergil among them, have been able to do it while at the same time producing a hymn to a renewed world order.



### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a full treatment of the author's life, see the article by Skutsch in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie* (henceforth *RE*), 4 (1900), p. 1236, and the discussion in Schanz-Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, 4.2 (1920), 78.

<sup>2</sup> For many years Corippus was confused with an African bishop named Cresconius. This confusion arose because of the error of a tenth century scribe, who made the following entry in the index of his collection of ecclesiastical works: "*Concordia canonum a Cresconio Africano episcopo digesta sub capitulis trecentis. iste nimirum Cresconius bella et victorias, quas Iohannes Patricius apud Africam de Saracenis gessit, hexametris versibus descripsit sub libris.*" The identification is erroneous. First, there is nothing in the life of Corippus that suggests that he was a bishop and much that suggests that he was not. Second, the word *Saracenis* indicates that the scribe in question was referring not to the African wars waged during the rule of Justinian, but to an action against the Saracens at the end of the seventh century. The hero of that action was not the hero of Corippus' epic but a later general named John the Patrician. For a further discussion of this, see I. Bekker's edition of Corippus' works in *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, 28 (Bonn, 1836), lvi, and Skutsch in *RE*, 1236.

<sup>3</sup> in *laudem Iustini Augusti Minoris*, praef., 37-39. References to this work are to the edition of A. Cameron (London, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> All references to this work are to the edition of J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear (Cambridge, 1970).



<sup>5</sup> The question of Corippus' career as a teacher, his reward for the composition of the *Iohannis* and his subsequent employment in Constantinople has been discussed by B. Baldwin and A. Cameron in an exchange of views in *Class. Quart.*, vol. 28, 372-376, and vol. 30, 334-339.

<sup>6</sup> *Ioh.*, Praef., 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ioh.*, Praef., 30.

<sup>8</sup> in *laud. Iust.*, Anast., 48.

<sup>9</sup> He says of Justin, for example: "*doctior et princeps novit quod littera rerum/ pars magna est magnusque labor scribentibus instat.*" in *laud. Iust.*, 4. 184-185.

<sup>10</sup> in *laud. Iust.*, 1.18-21.

<sup>11</sup> in *laud. Iust.*, 1.22-24.

<sup>12</sup> He writes: "*vince meae saevam fortunae, deprecor, iram:/ vincere fortunam plus est quam vincere bella./ nudatus propriis et plurima vulnera passus/ ad medicum veni, precibus pia pectora pulsans,*" in *laud. Iust.*, praef., 41-44.

<sup>13</sup> This question is discussed by A. Cameron in her commentary, (*In. laud. Iust.*, 22). She believes that the poet settled in Constantinople, that he had powerful friends at Court and that the poem had been commissioned by the Emperor, but that further speculation about Corippus' problems is impossible in view of his cryptic remarks.

<sup>14</sup> J. Partsch, *Fl. Cresconii Corippi Opera*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquiss.*, III, 2 (Berlin, 1879), xlv. Likewise Foggini in his preface quoted in Bekker's edition, lvi. Partsch bases his dating on what he takes to be two references to contemporary events in the panegyric: the plot of Aetherius and Abdius (1.60-61), which, according to Theophanes (1.373) was crushed in AD 566 and the subjection of the Lombards (1.12-18) who, according to Paulus Diaconus (*Historia Langobardorum* in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Langobardorum et Italicorum, saec. VI-IX*, 76), began to plunder Italy in AD 568. A. Cameron agrees with Partsch's dating of the poem (*In. laud. Iust.*, 2), suggesting that the first three books were written in AD 566, the fourth later in that year or early in AD 564. She adds to Partsch's arguments for this dating the argument that a work of this type needs to be topical and must, therefore, have appeared not long after the Emperor's accession.

<sup>15</sup> The eleventh century entry, which appears in Paulus Diaconus, *Chronica Monasterii Casinensis* in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auct. Antiquiss.*, VII, 747, reads: "*Cresconum de bellis Libycis.*" The fifteenth century entry which was seen by Foggini and is referred to in his preface as Vatic. 3961, reads: "*Liber Cresconii incipit Victoriis.*"

<sup>16</sup> Joh. Cuspius, *De Caesaribus atque Imperatoribus Romanis*, p.176. The reference reads: "*bellum vero Libycum, quod Iohannes contra Afros gessit, Fl. Cresconius Gorippus [sic] octo libris persecutus est, quibus titulum fecit Iohannidos; quos in Regia Bibliotheca Budae repperi. hi sic incipiunt.*" (followed by the first five lines of the first book). We should note that the epic is given the title *de bellis Libycis* in the *Casinensis*, but in the *Budensis* and in the *Excerpta Veronensis* in which a brief passage is quoted, it is given the title *Iohannis seu de bellis Libycis*. The *Trivultianus* bears no title. Diggle and Goodyear have pointed out in their preface that *Iohannis* might more properly be written *Iohanneis*, as suggested by E.J.Kenny, or *Iohannias*, as suggested by A. Cameron.

<sup>17</sup> Procopius, *de Bello Vandalico*, 2.28.45-52. All references to this author are to the Teubner edition of J. Haury (Leipzig, 1905-1913).

<sup>18</sup> Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, in *Patrologiae Latinae Cursus*, ed. Migne, v. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*.

<sup>20</sup> Jordanes, *Romana*, ed. Mommsen, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auct. Antiquiss.*, V, *pars prior*.

<sup>21</sup> Victor Tonnennensis, *Chronica*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctor. Antiquiss.*, XI.

<sup>22</sup> Marius Episcopus Avcenticensis, *Chronica*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctor. Antiquiss.*, XI.

<sup>23</sup> Caput Vadorum was, as we shall see, the landing place of both Belisarius and of John Troglyta in his later campaign. Procopius (*B. Vand.*, 1.14.17) places it about five days journey from Carthage by land. Charles Diehl, in *L'Afrique Byzantine* (Paris, 1896), situates it on his map facing 279 on the coast of Byzacium and identifies it with the modern Ras Khadidja, which is about seventy kilometers from Hadrumantum, the modern Sousse.



<sup>24</sup> The capture of Geilamir and the end of Vandal power in Africa is mentioned in several of the chronicles as well: Marcellinus Comes, 942, Victor Tonennensis, 198, and Marius Episcopus, 235. All enter it under the year AD 534 which is in agreement with Procopius' date. On the duration of Vandal power in Africa, however, there is some disagreement. According to Corippus the Vandal power was destroyed "*centeno anno*" (Ioh. 3.185). In the three chronicles above the Vandals are said to have ruled from ninety-two to ninety-seven years. If we can believe Jordanes, who places the original fall of Carthage to the Vandals in AD 439, then the capture of Geilamir actually occurred in the ninety-fifth year of Vandal rule. The number was no doubt rounded off by Corippus.

<sup>25</sup> Corippus mentions specifically an action at Leucada in which his hero played a part. Of this place we know nothing and can only guess that it may have been near Caesarea to which John had been despatched by Belisarius.

<sup>26</sup> This city is well known. According to Procopius it was near the river Bagradas, three hundred and fifty stades from Carthage (B. Vand. 2.15.12-13). It is mentioned as well by Christopher Cellarius in his *Notitiae Orbis Antiquae*, Lipsiae, 1732, 4.4.69, and appears both in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, 293, and in the *Itinerarium Antonini*, references to both of which works are to the edition of d'Urban in *Recueil des Itinéraires Anciens*, Paris, 1845. It should be noted that Conrad Miller's edition of the *Peut. Tab.* has been republished, Stuttgart, 1962. It is in map form and therefore somewhat more difficult to consult. I shall nevertheless include along with the page numbers in d'Urban the plate and segment numbers of this later edition, in this case: Plate XII, seg. V.3.

<sup>27</sup> Autenti is listed in the *Itinerarium Antonini*, 12, on the route from Thevis to Theveste, thirty miles from Sufetula, the modern Sfait, and one hundred miles from Theveste. Cellas Vatari presents a problem. Vatari does appear on the *Tab. Peut.*, 295, plate XII, seg. IV,3, as a city in Numidia, identified with the modern el Gattar. Cellas, however, unless emmended to *tellus*, cannot be explained. We may in fact be dealing with a confusion of names. Procopius notes that our hero fought under Germanus in a decisive battle at Scalae Veteres (B. Vand. 2.17.6). It is possible that Corippus has confused these two places, which were fairly distant from his own homeland.

<sup>28</sup> For this date, see J. Patsch, *Corippi Opera*, xvi.

<sup>29</sup> The date of Antalas' uprising presents some difficulty. Victor Tonennensis (*Chronica*, 201) places it in the year AD 543, Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon*, 945) in AD 541 and Procopius (B. Vand. 2.21.1) in the seventeenth year of Justinian's rule

of AD 544. The onslaught of the pestilence suggests that the date of Marcellinus Comes is incorrect and that fact that Corippus states that Africa enjoyed ten years of peace after the initial defeat of the Vandals in AD 534 (Ioh. 2.390) suggests that Procopius' date is correct.

<sup>30</sup> According to Victor Tonennensis (*Chronica*, 201) this battle was fought at a place called Cillium.

<sup>31</sup> Victor Tonennensis (*Chronica*, 201) puts this battle at Thacea.

<sup>32</sup> The dating of these final events before the despatch of John Troglyta by the Emperor can be easily established. The final revolt of the natives began, according to Procopius (B. Vand. 2.21.1), in AD 544. We may assume that Solomon's death occurred not long after that. The battle of Sicca Veneria and the deaths of Stutias and John, the son of Sisiniola, are placed in AD 545 by both Victor Tonennensis (*Chronica* 201) and by Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon* 945). Ariobindeus assumed command in Africa in the following year according to Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon* 945), and Victor Tonennensis (*Chronica* 201) places the deaths of Ariobindeus and Guntarith in the same year, AD 546, agreeing in this and in the duration of the rule of Guntarith with Procopius (B. Vand. 2.8.41).

<sup>33</sup> This celebrated city in the north of Mesopotamia was the capital of the district of Mygdonia. It was located on the river Mygdonius and was, according to Procopius (B. Pers. 1.10.14, 2.19.1-2) ninety-eight stades from Daras and a day's march from Sisauranon. It was an important military installation and served as a border post after its capture by the Persians (B. Pers. 2.18.7).

<sup>34</sup> Two cities named Theodosopolis are found in the history of Procopius, one on the river Aborhas (B. Pers. 2.19.29) forty stades from Daras (Aed. 2.2.16) and the other which was in Armenia on the Persian border (B. Pers. 1.10.18), situated forty-two stades from the mountain on which are found the springs of the Tigris and Euphrates (B. Pers. 1.17.4). This second city was near the fortress of Bolum (B. Pers. 1.15.32) four days from Citharizon (B. Pers. 2.24.13) and eight days from Doubios (B. Pers. 2.25.1). It is uncertain which of these two cities Corippus is referring to, since the action itself is not mentioned by Procopius. The only clues are contradictory. Procopius states that the Theodosopolis in Armenia was an important stronghold against the Persians (B. Pers. 1.10.19), but Corippus mentions the city in close connection with Daras (Ioh. 1.70-77) which would suggest the first of the two cities. Daras itself was, according to Procopius (B. Pers. 1.10.13-14), built by Anastasius and was ninety-eight stades from Nisibis and twenty-eight from the Persian border.



<sup>35</sup> The problems raised by this battle in the east underlines how difficult it is to determine the identity of Corippus' hero. Corippus identifies him in four ways: as the brother of Pappas (*Ioh.* 1.400), the son of Evantis (*Ioh.* 8.576) the father of Peter (*Ioh.* 1.197) and the spouse of a royal bride (*Ioh.* 1.202). For the purpose of identification his brother's name is the most important, for John is referred to as the brother of Pappas several times by Procopius (*B. Vand.* 2.17.16, 2.28.45). Although his father, Evantis, is not mentioned by Procopius, his mention by Corippus enables us to distinguish his hero from other figures named John who bear different patronymics. As for John's son, Peter, he is mentioned nowhere else and his name is not, therefore, useful. The reference to a royal bride raises further problems. It is tempting to identify this woman with Justina, the daughter of Germanus, who was himself the nephew of Justinian. Justina was in fact married to a general named John but he is referred to by Procopius as the nephew of one Vitellian and was a commander in Italy not Africa (*B. Goth.* 3.39.10). In fact a careful reading of Procopius (*B. Goth.* 4.23.4) and Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon* 945) indicates that this figure cannot have been the hero of Corippus' poem, for it is clear that he was in Italy at the time John, the brother of Pappas, was in Africa. We must conclude, therefore, that Corippus is either referring to another royal bride of whom we know nothing or that he has confused the family ties of the two generals. Mention of the hero of Corippus' epic in other histories and chronicles provides little help in all of this. In most cases he is referred to simply as *Iohannes*. Marcellinus Comes refers to him as *Iohannes Patricius* (*Chronicon*, 945), Paulus Diaconus as *Iohannem exconsulem* (*Hist. Lang.*, 62) and Jordanes as *Iohannes Troglyta* (*Romana*, 57). This last appellation was employed by Charles Diehl in his *l'Afrique Byzantine* (chapt. 2, *passim*) and thereafter by modern scholars. It may suggest Macedonian lineage.

<sup>36</sup> For a full discussion of these tribes see M. Riedmüller, *Die Iohannis des Corippus als Quelle Libyscher Ethnologie* (Augsburg, 1919) as well as J. Partsch "Die Berbern bei Corippus" in *Satura Viadrina* (Breslau, 1896) and H. Barth, *Wanderungen durch die Küstenländer des Mittelmeeres* (Berlin, 1849). Corippus employs three general names for these people: Mauri, Massyli and Mazax. The first two names are common; the last, which may in fact be the name of an individual tribe, appears in Pliny (*H.N.* 6.7.6.21), Lucan (*Bell. Civ.* 4.681) and Claudian (*Laud. Stil.* 1.356). We may divide these tribes into three groups, not on the basis of the names above but on the basis of geography: those from Byzacium, those who lived near the Syrtis Maior and those whose homes were in the west in Numidia. To the first group belong the people of Antalas, the Frexes and their allies, the Silvaciae, the Naffur, the Silcadinet, the Silvaizan, the Macares and a number of tribes who lived near the Syrtis Minor, the Astrices, the Anacutatur, the Celiani and Imaclas. Corippus tells us that the

second group came from *extremis oris* (*Ioh.* 2.85). They inhabit the lands near the Syrtis Maior and include the Marmaridae, the Nasamones, the Laguatans, the Ifurac, the Muctuniana *manus*, the Velanidei and the Barcae. Corippus states that the third group of tribes come *alternis ab oris* (*Ioh.* 2.140). They are clearly the people of laudas and are referred to as the Aurasitania *manus* because of their homeland's proximity to Mount Aurasius, the modern Aures. In short, these nomadic tribes lived in an area to the south of Africa Proconsularis, stretching from the Syrtis Maior in the east, along the Syrtis Minor, through the mountains at the headwaters of the Bagradas River to Mount Aurasius in the west.

<sup>37</sup> Marcellinus Comes (*Chronicon* 945) disagrees with Procopius and Victor Tonnennensis (see *supra* n. 30) in placing the assassination of Guntarich in AD 547 rather than AD 546. This is not a serious discrepancy. It probably means that the tyrant was killed late in one year or early in the next.

<sup>38</sup> The time sequence in Procopius' account is obscured by variant reading in the text of the *B. Vand.* In V and P the account of the second campaign begins with the words "*chrono de hysteron*", in O with *chrono de ou pollo hysteron*. In the *B. Goth* (4.17.21), however, the second campaign is said to have begun: *ou pollo hysteron*.

<sup>39</sup> It is true that Procopius says that after the second campaign of John the Romans had no enemies in Libya (*B. Goth.* 4.17.22). It is possible, nevertheless, that there may have been some skirmishes with natives in the west.

<sup>40</sup> Ptolemy (*Geographia*, ed. Müller, Paris, 1901, 618) mentions a *Castra Cornelii* which he locates between Utica and the mouth of the Bagradas. In his notes Mazzuchelli reports that he found a *Castra Galbae*, a *Castra Severi*, a *Castra Nova* and, in Byzacium, a *Forum Antonianum*, but we cannot identify the place near which this first campaign took place with any certainty.

<sup>41</sup> This place must be near the Syrtis Minor. It is mentioned earlier in the poem (*Ioh.* 2.77) in connection with other places known to be in that area and is near the land of the Astrices, a tribe who dwell near the Syrtis Minor. Corippus tells us as well that it is near the coastline along which John was unable to ship supplies from Carthage because of an unfavorable south wind, i.e. a coastline stretching north-south not east-west.

<sup>42</sup> This city is mentioned by Procopius in this connection as well (*B. Vand.* 2.28.48). It appears in many works on ancient geography. Cellarius (*Not. Orbis Ant.* 4.5.17 and map facing p. 864) places it south of Utica between the Bagradas and Tusca. In the *Itinerarium Antonini*, 6, and in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, 297; plate XII, seg.



V,1, it is located one hundred twenty-two miles from Carthage and seventy-three from Theveste. It has been identified with the modern Lorbeus.

<sup>43</sup> This place is mentioned by no other author. Lucan (*Bell. Civ.* 9.119) mentions a *Castra Catonis*, but we have no reason to identify these two places with one another. Mazzuchelli's suggestion in his notes that *Campi Catonis* may be near Utica, a city associated with Cato, must be incorrect, for we know that John and his army were far south of that city at this point in the campaign.

<sup>44</sup> These events have already been described above.

<sup>45</sup> Corippus provides the names of some of the commanders on either side in his text. John is, of course, the Roman commander-in-chief. He has as his second-in-command one Ricinarius, a figure who appears briefly in Procopius' account of the Persian Wars as an envoy sent to the Persian leader Chosroes (*B. Pers.* 2.27.24-25). For the present battle the Roman army's right wing is commanded by the following officers: Gentius, Putzintulus, Gregorius, Geisirith, Marturius, Senator and the native chieftain Cusina. On the left are John the Elder, who is not to be confused with the hero of the poem, Fronimuth, Marcentius, Liberatus, Ulitan, Ifisdaias, Bitipten and Tarasis. Two of these figures are also mentioned by Procopius: Marcentius (*B. Vand.* 2.27.5) and Gregorius, the nephew of Artabanes, (*B. Vand.* 2.27.10-11). Among the native commanders Cusina is the only additional figure we can identify. He appears frequently in the text of Procopius, first as one of the leaders of the second native uprising in the time of Solomon (*B. Vand.* 2.10.6), then as an ally of Ariobindeus (*B. Vand.* 2.25.15) and finally as an ally first of Guntarith and then of Artabanes (*B. Vand.* 2.27.24-27). The native force appears to be under the command of Antalas in this battle. He is identified as the son of Guenfan and had been, as we have seen, an ally of Rome until his falling out with Solomon in AD 543. Among the subordinate native commanders are Ierna, the leader of the Srytic tribes and the priest of the native god Gurzil, and Bruten and Carcasan, both of whom will figure as important leaders in the second campaign.

<sup>46</sup> In those editions in which the poem is divided into seven books this battle ends at the close of the fourth book.

<sup>47</sup> This passage (*Ioh.* 6.104-106) raises the question, already touched upon, of the interval between John's first and second campaigns. If we accept Corippus' statement that the interval was brief, then it remains only to ask how many weeks or months did in fact pass during that interval. The answer has perhaps been suggested by Partsch (*Corippi Opera* xxix), who notes that, while the climate appears to have presented no problem during the first campaign, it caused considerable difficulties for both

armies during the second. He points as well to Corippus' statement (*Ioh.* 7.70-71) that the sea was open for sailing in the period in which the second campaign takes place and concludes that it must have been summertime. His hypothesis is probably correct. If, as we have seen, John arrived in Africa late in AD 546 or early in AD 547, the first campaign would have taken place in the late winter or early spring months. It is not unlikely, therefore, that he faced the foe for a second time two or three months later in the summer.

<sup>48</sup> For the location of this place see above n. 41.

<sup>49</sup> It is likely that this is the coastal town which Procopius calls *Iouce*, placing it nine days journey down the coast from Carthage (*B. Vand.* 1.15.8). This location in the southern part of Byzacium near the Syrtis Minor agrees with all the information provided by Corippus. Partsch (*Corippi Opera*, xxxiv) found a description of the town and its harbor in Ferrandus and, on the basis of the details given in it, identified *Iunci* with the modern village of Ksar Unga. For Laribus, see above, n. 42.

<sup>50</sup> This seemingly mature action by the hero's son suggests that he was considerably older than he was at the time the expedition arrived in Africa and that, therefore, this campaign took place several years later. On the other hand, it is not unlikely that the poet exaggerated the boy's role to flatter his father.

<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note in this regard that J.B. Bury in his revision of Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* used a good deal of information from Corippus which had been unavailable to Gibbon.

<sup>52</sup> Much the same conclusion is reached by Yves Moderan in "*Corippe et l'Occupation Byzantine de l'Afrique*," *Antiquités Africaines*, 22 (1986), 195-212. In his "*Epische Kunst in Coripps Iohannis*," *Philologues*, 124 (1980), 109-135, W. Ehlers suggests that some of Corippus' changes in the historical narrative are due to the influence of his models, Vergil and Lucan.

<sup>53</sup> For the recruitment and settlement of the *limitanei* see A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 284-602, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1964), I, 663.

<sup>54</sup> While it is possible that the *limitanei* provoked some of these nomadic tribes by interfering with their accustomed paths of transhumance, the rebellions of these people clearly had other political and economic roots as well. Inter-tribal warfare, desire for wealth, preferment and power all played an important role in the natives' relationship with the empire. It is clear that we are dealing here with politically shrewd native chieftains, not with simple native herdsmen angered by Roman



interference with their normal patterns of farming and herding.

<sup>55</sup> The terrain is discussed by Jean-Marie Lassere who notes the "impression générale de secheresse" (168) and the "immense horizontalité (166) which Corippus' descriptions suggest. "La Byzacene Méridionale au milieu du VI e p.C. d'après La Iohannide de Corippus," *Pallas*, XXXI, 163-178 and 194.

<sup>56</sup> Early in the poem Corippus starkly contrasts the seemingly savage behavior of the natives (*Ioh.* 1.27-47) and the humanity of the Romans (*Ioh.* 1.500-508).

<sup>57</sup> In her edition of *In Laudem Iustini*, A. Cameron discusses Corippus treatment of Christian themes. Although she notes a certain literary self-consciousness in Corippus' practice and an avoidance of the scriptural analogies found in other Christian poets, she emphasizes the fact that in that poem too the main theme is the fact that Justin's rule comes from God (8-9). As we shall see, Corippus was not reluctant to describe acts of Christian worship, i.e. prayer and the liturgy.

<sup>58</sup> For the treatment of this theme in prose, see Cicero *Pro Lege Manilia*, in verse the *locus classicus*, Vergil, *Aen.* 6.

<sup>59</sup> For the practice of the poet Alcimus Ecditius Avitus, the sixth century bishop of Vienne, see my introduction in *The Poems of Alcimus Ecditius Avitus*.

<sup>60</sup> For the attitude of prayer see Vergil *Aen.* 1.93; for the custom of thanking the gods for victory and safety compare the Roman custom of declaring a *supplicatio* as in Cicero, *Cat.* 3.6.15, as well as the custom of dedicating weapons to gods who have acted as saviors, as in Horace, *Odes*, 3.26.3-6.

<sup>61</sup> This epithet is frequently applied to Jupiter by Vergil: *Aen.* 2.689, 4.206, 5.687, 9.625, *et alibi*.

<sup>62</sup> The Greek text of this prayer can be found in the *Septuaginta*, X, *Psalmi cum Odis*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Gottingen, 1967). For a discussion of the origins and history of prayer see R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), 612-619.

<sup>63</sup> For the Emperor's position as an instrument of divine will and vice-regent of Christ see J.M. Hussey, *The Byzantine World* (New York, 1961), 12. For the special sanctity of the Emperor after Constantine see N.H. Baynes and H. St. B. Moss, *Byzantium* (Oxford, 1948), 268-269.

<sup>64</sup> The early church saw the practice of penance as an integral part of the Christian experience. For this see Tertullian *De Paenitentia*, Origen, *De Oratione* and Cyprian, *Ad Novatianum*.

<sup>65</sup> There are a number of such descriptions in the *Aeneid*, e.g. the burial of Misenus, 6.212ff. and the rites of Hercules, 8.280ff.

<sup>66</sup> An extensive treatment of early Christian ritual appears in the *Peregrinatio Aetheriae*, *passim*.

<sup>67</sup> Psalm 126.

<sup>68</sup> Among the earliest visionaries to be condemned were the Montanists. See Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.* 5.16.6-10. On the subject of orthodoxy, it should be noted as well that Corippus carefully avoids disputes over dogma in his epic, as H. Hofmann has recognized: "Corippus as a Patristic Author?," *Vigiliae Christianae*, v. 43 (1989), 367.

<sup>69</sup> e.g. Ovid, *Meta.*, 2.1ff.

<sup>70</sup> e.g. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.15.

<sup>71</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.17ff.

<sup>72</sup> Corippus' approach here contrasts with that of Avitus (see n. 59), who often introduces Satan himself as the personification of evil, especially in his second book, which treats the fall of Adam and Eve.

<sup>73</sup> The term *tonans* is, for example, used of the Christian God by many early Christian writers.

<sup>74</sup> For *fatum* used of death see *O.L.D.*: *fatum*: 6A.

<sup>75</sup> Possibly related to Mastema, a name employed in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha for a fallen angel, in Jubilees (10:1-14) for the chief of the spirits and in Noah (1.155) for the source of physical and moral contamination.

<sup>76</sup> Alfred Welzel, *De Claudiani et Corippi Sermones Epici* (Breslau, 1908).

<sup>77</sup> See Leumann-Hoffmann-Szantyr, *Lateinischer Grammatik* (Munich, 1965), II, 325, 602.



<sup>78</sup> See Leumann-Hoffmann-Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik*, II, 312, 577.

<sup>79</sup> E. Appel, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Corippus mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des vulgären Elementes seiner Sprache* (Munich, 1904).

<sup>80</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Corippus' metrical practice, see my Columbia dissertation: *The Iohannis of Flavius Cresconius Corippus, Prolegomena and Translation*, 92-100.

<sup>81</sup> Rudolf Amman, *De Corippo Priorum Poetarum Latinorum Imitator* (Oldenburg, 1885) and "De Corippo Priorum Poetarum Latinorum Imitatore. Particula Altera." in *Program des Grossherzoglichen Gymnasium zu Oldenburg*, no. 629, 1888.

<sup>82</sup> With regard to his unquestioning support of the imperial cause, its strategies and tactics, a question might be raised about Corippus' treatment of the character of his hero, John Troglyta, who, although he is given all proper praise in the more formulaic lists of his qualities and accomplishments, is sometimes pictured as less attractive and capable in narrative passages. His seemingly excessive emotionalism and endless weeping are probably not an issue here, for as A. Cameron has noted, emotionalism is typical of Corippus (*In laud. Iust.*, 136). He does, however, appear as somewhat irresolute from time to time, especially when drawing up tactical plans. He seems to rely heavily upon the advice of his second-in-command, Ricinarius (2.322 ff.) and twice is persuaded to abandon his sensible battle plan by his comrades (6.465 ff., 6.528 ff.). John is also portrayed as somewhat unsympathetic to the needs of his own men (6.326 ff but also 6.367 ff), as high-handed in dealing with enemy embassies (1.494 ff.) and as rather cruel and bloodthirsty (5.404 ff., 5.464 ff.). Although these flaws are by no means emphasized, they do contrast markedly with the qualities of Ricinarius, who is referred to as *mitis*, *sapiens* and *insons*, as *corde humilis* and *pietate benignus* (4.586-588). What should we make of this? It would be wrong, it seems to me, to suggest that this candor in dealing with one figure demonstrates that Corippus was in fact disenchanted with the Roman cause or that he was practicing some kind of literary double-cross. It may indicate, however, that Corippus, the native African, was not entirely blind to the less attractive aspects of imperial domination, to the fact that the commander of Justinian's force could be every bit as rash and cruel as his counterparts among the Berber warriors. The treatment of the character of Ricinarius seems to be part of Corippus' attempt to describe the close friendship of the general and his second-in-command and especially the manner in which their natures complemented one another.

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## TRANSLATION

### Preface

I have presumed, noble princes, to tell about the laurels a conqueror won, and write a poem of celebration in a time of peace. I have chosen to write of John's greatness in war, of a hero's deeds destined to be read by future generations, for literature makes everything known in this long-lived world, recalling all the battles of the leaders of old. Who would know mighty Aeneas, who, cruel Achilles, who, brave Hector; who would know about the horses of Diomedes or of Palamedes' battlelines; who would know Ulysses, if literature did not record their ancient labor? The bard of Smyrna described brave Achilles and Vergil, that learned poet, described Aeneas. The task John accomplished prompted me to describe his battles and to tell men yet to come about all of his deeds. John is superior to Aeneas in valor, whereas the poem I write is unworthy of Vergil. The great deeds of our general, the valor of the man and the wars he put down loudly proclaim how rash I am, and my poet's gift, unequal to its task, finds itself in difficulty and falters in its work. On this side stand gratitude and the glory it confers, on that, pale self doubt. And yet, that string of splendid<sup>1</sup> deeds compels me to write, for though cold in genius, I am warmed by my hero's accomplishments. And so, in a crude poem, I celebrate this extraordinary general, even as my own dull wit impedes the tongue within my mouth. Well, what shall I do? Shall I who once recited my work in the countryside, shall I, an ignorant country bard, publish my poetry in the city? Perhaps - I confess it - a misplaced



syllable will make my verse limp, for mine is a rustic Muse. But surely glory must be granted for praise proclaimed in verse. Or am I alone to be cheated of a reward and write not at all? The terror that has been driven from my heart stirs my lips all the more. Let there be, then, some acclaim for the praise my mouth proclaims. The verses which learning denies our victory provides, and our great joys are my restorative whenever I grow weary with my song. If, amid many triumphs, Carthage may rejoice through my efforts, then let the acclaim, in all justice, be mine and, I pray, your affection as well. Even as my rustic Muse contends with the Muses of Rome, fame lifts our general starward. And so, if it is your pleasure that I recite the words of my opening book, then I shall deliver, as I should at your commands, the beginning of my poem.

#### Book I

Battle standards and captains, fierce nations and war's destruction I sing; treachery and the slaughter of men and hard toils. I sing of disasters in Libya and of an enemy broken in its might, of the hunger men had to endure and the thirst which threw two armies into deadly confusion. I sing of nations in disarray, laid low, overcome, and of a commander marking his deeds with a great triumph. Once again the Muses want to sing of the sons of Aeneas. Peace is restored to Libya and takes its place here as wars draw to a close. Victory stands firm with its two wings shining. Now piety has turned its gaze upon the earth from heaven above. With Justice as her companion, Harmony, the joyful protectress, extends both arms in embrace and remakes the world. You, Justinian, Emperor, sublime between them, rise from your lofty throne in your triumphs and, as joyful victor, lay down laws for these broken tyrants; for your renowned steps tread upon all these kings, and their purple now gladly serves a Roman rule. Beneath your feet the enemy lies conquered, harsh

bonds bind the tribes, ropes tie their entangled hands behind their backs with a tight knot and their cruel necks are punished by the imposition of chains.

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[If I had a hundred] mouths to produce the songs of a hundred hearts, my spirit would be too weak, I would lack the talent required to sing of it all, ranging over the wastelands of the wide earth. And so I shall touch upon the highpoints alone, for to those belong the greatest praise.

Weary Africa was tottering beneath great danger, for a wild frenzy had taken fire with barbarian arms, proud in plots and steel, flames and men, setting alight all the cities of the plundered land and dragging captives from every part of Africa. Now no distinction was made; none could spare the seer or grant to the weary aged the burial which duty requires. Then every corpse lay transfixed with swords, and no son was permitted to place the body of his slain father beneath a mound of earth or pour fitting tears upon his wounds. As the father was slain, mother and children were dragged off and their possessions plundered. The evil might of Mars pressed on and the holy dead were left to the deserted land. The noble and the poor were caught up in one disaster. Grief resounded on all sides, terror and sad fear visited all the people and the entire land was thrown into disorder by dire perils. Who will describe the tears, destruction, spoils, the conflagrations and murders, the treachery, groans and torments, the bonds and the rapes; who has the power to enumerate the pitiable sorrows? Africa, a third of the world, was perishing in flames and smoke.

Now the Emperor in his goodness was considering these cares in his heart, pondering whom he wished to send to our shores as commander of his captains and chief leader of his army, for he yearned to stay such great destruction. As he reviewed all these things, John alone seemed satisfactory in valor and counsel, seemed both brave and wise. Him alone he considered able to meet the savage tribes and zealously lay low their hostile battalions. Surely the glory of the man, the marks



of outstanding achievement, the victory in a serious war with a proud kingdom pleased him: how he had expelled the Persians, with what deadly blow he had laid low the Parthians who had once been confident of withstanding him with their multitudes and their thick flights of arrows. In those days the broad fields of Nisibis flowed with the blood of the Persians, and Nabedes, second only to the Parthian king, relying on his wild bravery, joined John in battle and lost his allies in the moment of his own victory. Then, in flight and driven by fear, he was scarcely able to close his own gates and prevent the Roman horsemen from breaking into the central citadel of Nisibis, where John, in his victory, struck the tall gates of the Persians with his spear. All these brave deeds of the loyal man ran before the eyes of the Emperor. He considered and reflected upon those labors: how the close-ranked enemy had set a palisade around Theodosiopolis and begun a dangerous siege, how John had come swiftly through the darkness of night and brought aid to the fortifications of the tottering city, how, through the very midst of the enemy, he entered the friendly gates, so that mighty Mermeroes retreated in terror from the walls; and then how the same enemy, more savage still with his serried arms, dared to approach Daras and tempt the Latin phalanx in battle, Daras, the city that had circled its high battlements with a shining wall of steel and the place where the commander was ordering his standards. But after snatching the first city from the enemy by his watchfulness, the commander pursued them as they fled, seized the roads before them and freed all the fields, lest the savage enemy lay them waste or do anyone harm. First, he seized the rampart of the lofty wall, then suffered no long delay. Ever brave, he dared at once to advance against the enemy in the middle of the fields and struck down countless bands in a successful battle. Then he put to flight their distinguished leaders, tribes linked in alliance and Mermeroes himself, the Parthian lord, now defeated and overthrown. Finally all of the Persians, in fear of the pursuing Romans, fled and hurled their swords and gleaming medals onto the middle of the battlefield. The

Persian blades gleamed over the entire plain, while light scabbards and spears, shields and crests, bodies and horses and the armor-bearers of the captains, once haughty in their weaponry, lay strewn on the ground. So he too, their general, would have lain prostrate on the ground had not the great-souled commander wished to take him alive. It was in defeat, however, that Mermeroes, entering with but a few comrades, looked upon the lofty city. Then wise Urbicius, whom his imperial highness had as his prime minister and trusted adviser in affairs of state and whom he had chosen to send to those enemy lands to learn about the dangers posed by that cruel war, stood in the middle of the plain and blessed the Lord. When he saw the victorious Romans swarming forth and the fearful enemy running through the devastated fields, he extended both his palms and eyes to heaven and joyfully cried: "Eternal glory to You, Almighty God, because after all this time I have at last deserved to behold the Persians defeated by the valor of John, our commander.

The Emperor, turning over these achievements in his mind again and again, judged that this man alone was able with his time-tried loyalty to defend Libya in the hour of its oppression. Without further delay he ordered the commander to be summoned from the most remote corner of the world. Untroubled, John took leave of both the land and his enemies. Now destined to journey to the waters of the west, he carried out the orders of the Emperor in a short time and then, returning as victor, set foot upon the golden doorstep of the Roman gate. Joyfully, he stood at the feet of the Emperor who looked down at his servant with countenance serene.<sup>2</sup> John was quick to bestow glad kisses on the kind feet of his lord. Then the Emperor bade him to give a brief account of his deeds in the east. At this request he filled the ears of his serene lord with a report of the wars he had brought to a conclusion. And His Imperial Highness, rejoicing in his foster son, expressed the desire that he might always conquer in that way and sent him at once to the defense of Libya.



At the command of the Emperor the ships were loaded with troops, with both supplies and arms, and the unskilled recruit who would have to learn of battle, was sent off under the ensign of a great leader, who would soon put down the rebellion. And now the moment came when a gentle wind, filling the sails, made the waves fit for sailing and Thetis, promising good fortune, urged the sailors to set forth on the sea.

But the mighty Emperor, in the fullness of his devotion, instructed the general with these words: "Under my rule our state grants rewards equal to the merit of the task performed. It helps all to advance and makes those whom it sees serving its land and people well, powerful in their degrees. Now hear these words and may it please you to learn the causes of my action and keep them in mind. Pitiable Africa, lying beneath innumerable perils, sent its cry to my ears, and duty drives me to bring aid to that distressed land. Brave general, I have made my decision. You seem capable of dealing with Libya; so set your standards in motion and with all speed embark upon the lofty ships. Then, with your accustomed valor, relieve the wretched Africans and with your arms lay low the battle lines of the Laguatan rebels. Let their subject necks bend beneath our feet once they are curbed by your valor. Do you as well abide by the ancient precepts of your ancestors: relieve the distressed and destroy the rebellious. This our piety desires: to spare those who are subjects. This is the glory of our valor: to subdue nations that are arrogant. Hold to these, my commands, my loyal commander, and observe them. May Christ, Our Lord and God, do the rest, changing this situation for the better, and may He guide you through all this undertaking with His favor. And for your deserving deeds may we see your glory justly increased with still better titles.

The commander fell before him and pressed kisses upon his divine feet, watering them with the flow of his tears. The paternal Emperor, as he beheld the general departing, joined him in his grief, as piety shook a master's spirit.

Then, as he approached the fleet, the great-souled commander encouraged the cheering sailors. They launched the ships, and the marble surface of the water felt the first sweep of the reverberating oars. Quickly they unfurled the sails, pressed on with loud shouts and, to a dreadful creaking, loosened the heavy sheets and spread out the billows of their sails. Now the wind with its soft gusts moved the sails as it struck them, their keels hid the deep and the narrow water's surface lay concealed beneath a hundred ships. Favorable breezes grew more frequent as the west wind rose and drove the barks on. Moving fast now, they cleaved the waters with brazen prows and made furrows in its marble surface with their beaks, as the foaming waves murmured beneath the long keels. The fleet sailed through the Thracian straits that are pinched on either side by the coast, where the sea separates Sestos from the fields of Abydos, then hastened over the waves of Sigeum, confident in a following wind. They sailed past the sad shore of ancient Troy, told again the famous poems of the poet of Smyrna and pointed out the lands of their ancestors from the lofty decks. Here was the palace of Priam, here the house of Aeneas, which lay apart surrounded by trees, here cruel Achilles dragged the body of Hector behind his hurtling chariot. On that very shore Aeneas, their victorious ancestor had laid low the mighty Demoleus, Aeneas by whose founding act the lofty walls of Rome and the bright name of empire shine forth and hold, as lord, all the broad earth under their sway. They recited all the battles of the Greek war: how Patroclus fell, slain by the spear of Hector, how dark Memnon was overcome by a wound Achilles inflicted and how in her devotion Aurora wept for the death of her mighty son, how Penthesilea, the warrior maid, fell amid her troops, on what night Rhesus was killed, how the youthful Troilus met bold Achilles, by what unyielding doom the victor himself fell beneath Apollo's arrow and pierced with what wound Paris, the abductor, sank to the ground. Afterwards they recounted the final burning of weary Troy and the flight of



Aeneas: how, after the loss of his wife, he carried his son, famed for the name of Iulus, and his father with him on his ships, sailing over so many blue waters.

Peter, the commander's noble son, heard them telling about the battles. When he heard the renowned name of the boy Iulus, his boyish heart burned with a wondrous desire to read those things himself, for he wanted to learn about the wars. He was moved by a great spirit of devotion and duty, imagined that he was Ascanius, that his mother was Creusa. She was a the daughter of a king and so too his mother was a king's daughter. Aeneas was Ascanius' father, John was his. He rejoiced as he thought about these things and the joy touched his heart. He told them to his father, to the servants, to all of the men as they traversed the sail-winged sea, he, Peter, the one joy of his great father, the second hope of the Roman empire.

Untroubled by storms the fleet glided over the Aegean waters and in the same way cut an even swifter course across the deep waves of the Adriatic, riding before a following wind. Soon they touched the shores of Sicily. Then the wind forsook the ships and all the sea lay motionless as the winds grew silent. Gentler waves never broke upon any other shore. The two-formed Scylla was silent then and silent the barking of the dogs. Nor did the waves in their agitation force the wolves' mouths to make the rocks wail. Although the edge of either shore comes together here and the strand on either side shifts in confusion along the narrow strait, the Charybdis, although never placated in the past, held its waves motionless and neither spewed forth nor sucked in the churning breakers. The sails fell loose and, swelled by no breeze, joined their masts. Then, ordering his comrades to loosen the sheets, the commander spoke: "Enter this quiet port," he said, and at his bidding the sailors flew swiftly over all the rigging. One ran to loosen the sails, another furled their billows, another encouraged his joyful companions and delighted them with the sweet sounds of his light clear song. The men gave voice to their courage with their shouts, and

their own voices gave them help in their labors and provided the sailors with both strength and joy.

Close by lay the Caucasian fields of Sicilian Pachynum. They form a curving shoreline, whose harbor the anchors of the Roman fleet caught at with their hooked bites. Now evening was ruffling the star-bearing waves of the sea, drawing a night foul with darkness over the earth. At that moment, the great-souled commander John was asleep on the deck, free of care, when the watchful helmsman of his ship happened to feel a gentle wind rising. Then, with haste the young sailors ran here and there over all the ships, preparing their gear. They set loose the cables from the shore without even waiting for the command of their leader. The sailors raised all of the sails and spread their surfaces full against the winds.

Driven by this wind, the fleet had now reached the middle of the sea. A dawn wet with dew was rising from the horizon, leading day forth, when a grim form took its place before the commander's feet. Akin to darkness, its face seemed Moorish, fearful in its dark color, as it rolled its eyes in the flames that engulfed it. "To what shores are you guiding your fleet?" it asked. "Do you imagine that you will make it across to Libya?" To this the commander replied, "You see our ships crossing and do you still ask this question?" Then the gloomy form, scowling and continuing to roll its eyes that were terrifying with their sulphurous horror, said, "You shall not cross." The commander perceived that it was a fallen angel, hurled long ago from heaven above. And yet, he did not fear that seemingly human face as it assumed savage forms, but followed it as it fled and struggled to lay hold of it. The spirit, however, sprinkling thick darkness mixed with dust before the commander, confused him as he went with a cloud of foul mist. Then John's own father, his countenance untroubled, came down from lofty Olympus, clothed in white with a robe of stars, and stood before John's eyes as he searched for his weapons. He stayed his son's hand and from his holy lips let fall these words: "Let this madness not provoke your



spirit to such anger, but in your goodness spurn this evil. Flee from the dire challenges of this evil spirit and be not afraid." The commander replied to him: "Most blessed father and man of God, you behold him offering battle and endeavoring to close off our means of approach." Then the old man benevolently answered: "Happy man, following my steps, make your way with me as your leader." So he spoke and, bathed in great brilliance, calmly raised aloft the dazzling fire of his torch.

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Then, wavering, each helmsman stood still and like a fugitive turned his back to the wind. He admitted that all his skill was overpowered and in his wretchedness did not know where to turn his ship. Nor could the tattered sails withstand the gusts in their billows. They served no use and so the sailors lowered them and abandoned the ships to the waves and the wind. They took various courses and were scattered over different parts of the sea wherever chance or the driving wind or nocturnal wandering happened to bring them. Fortune threatened cruel shipwreck for the wretched men, who lost all hope of safety and despaired of their lives amid the manifest dangers.

The sad commander groaned and lifted his heart to the heavens. Guided by piety and as fear itself impelled him, he sought the help of God with welling tears. Prostrate and as a suppliant in prayer, he began with these words: "Almighty Father of the Word, Creator of all things, Beginning without end and God, all the elements proclaim You and tremble before their Author, their Lord and their Maker. Before You the winds and the clouds quake, for You the air does service, the lofty sky resounds and the great frame of the shaken universe is thrown into disorder. You are aware, Almighty Father, You in Your foreknowledge know all. Not wanting gold, not because I see some reward am I driven to go to Libya, but to end the war and rescue wretched souls. This is my only desire, this all the longing of my spirit. To

this place the benevolent command of the Emperor alone sends me. With You as his master, our master commands and himself confesses that just service is by Your nature owing to You. You subject us all to him and bid us serve. It is Your precepts I have followed. Look down, holy Lord, behold our trials now, gracious and serene Yourself, and in Your goodness, come to our aid in this hour of great ruin. But if his own crimes condemn John as a sinner in Your judgement, then destroy me by any other death but spare us now for the sake of Peter, my son." As he spoke that name the sounds caught in his mouth and a father's heart trembled, his hands and feet fell to the deck, colder than ice, and all of his limbs were shaken. He poured forth tears like a river and raised a mighty groan to the stars.

As he prayed in this way, the Lord took up his tears and his words. He ordered the powerful winds calmed and restrained the storm with a barrier of mountains. Quickly the clouds, with their fleece thinning into nothingness, took flight, the sun returned and the day grew kind once again, suddenly bright as its rosy lamp appeared in the clear sky. The unmistakable command of God spread smooth the marble sea, favorable winds arose and the sailors joyfully leapt up and, crying out confused commands, spread their sails to the gentle breeze. The billows were filled and then, from all sides, they welcomed back the ships of their companions until canvas shone over the entire expanse of the sea. Now nearer and nearer to the shore the ships flew, driven forward by the wind's blasts, cutting the blue water on a course that would take them to their destination.

At long last the commander looked out at the shore of the burning land and recognized the invincible reins of war. Nor was the portent doubtful, for the fires he saw bore true witness. The winds unrolled bolts of flame that curled at their crests, and ashes, mixed with smoke and soaring above the stars, sprinkled the very top of the sky with tiny sparks. Now the fire would shoot up, burning its way into the middle of heaven's vault and enveloping all the strength of the scorched land. The



crops that would have fed the people, that stood ripe on every farm, were burned, and all the trees fueled the raging fire with their foliage until, consumed themselves, they fell into ashes. The suffering cities were overturned as their citizens were slaughtered and their fortifications, with their ramparts torn away, stood in flames. This is the way Phaethon, swept onwards by his flame-breathing steeds, would have burned everything in every corner of the earth with the chariot he should never have been given, had not the omnipotent Father, taking pity on the earth, unyoked the panting horses with his heaven-born bolt, checking fire with fire.

The commander was consumed by a desire to aid the wretched land and in a rage greater than even his sense of duty normally provoked he bathed his cheeks in a flood of tears. His courage took fire in the arms he knew so well, and anger prompted him to direct his steps blindly into the water even before the ships reached the shore. But nature restrained this impulse, nature and moderation which, when mingled with courage, governs all deeds with its rule, weighing what is glorious against what is insignificant. And so he ordered his ships to be turned and rowed with greater haste to the shore and joyfully approached the sands he knew so well.

The sea, as it breaks on the land, does not everywhere wash the shore of Byzacium with waves of equal size. One stretch, since it has calmer tides, lies smooth and so an anchorage is afforded to curved ships there where the salty shoals form a harbor that is quite calm. There no power of the south wind is able to stir the tranquil waves with its motion, nor does the wind make the clear sea tremble. Another stretch, however, is beaten by the waves of the sea which, as it flows back against the shore, bellows as it breaks upon the rocks. The waters that make their way that far resound on the crags and are diffused over the dark seaweed. There the swollen north wind and the east wind, itself heavier with storms, churn up the sea from its very depths. Then, their cables broken by the force of the sea, unlucky ships perish, their planks lie in the cruel fields and with them, among the weeds, often lie

the rotten prows of the ships. This is the reason why sailors fear and flee from the dangers of the place and make for the safe shallows of calmer parts.

On that shore the Roman fleet had drawn up in the time when Belisarius, who would himself take the African realm captive, set foot upon the Libyan coast. Because of the very different character of the region just beyond, sailors in ages past called the harbor Shoals Head. Coming to that place, the great-souled leader John, with courage like that of Belisarius, also let his sails fall slack. Happy indeed was the place that offered the Latin fleet a safe and favorable anchorage. The anchor, made fast by its bite, held their ships securely on its shore. The brave commander recognized the harbor and, rejoicing in the place, while still on board his ship, pointed to it and addressed his companions with joy in his heart. "When the ships of those who would wreak vengeance reached this coastal plain, it was on this beach that I first set foot, confident in the arms of my youth, for I was one of the captains. When treacherous Geilamir, the tyrant, held the rule of these Libyan shores, the Roman band took their first steps upon these sands and here drank the water of Libya. On that day the army, arriving in untested armor, positioned its trenches on this strand. Do you see how that mound over there next to the sea rises in a heap of sand under the fickle motion of the south wind? There the commander Belisarius pitched his tents on higher ground with all his standards in view, and his captains and tribunes took their places around him. And I, accompanied by my blessed brother as well, set up my camp in this place. Alas, how heavy is the lot fate gives us, how hostile to the good of men! How many joys cherished by devoted brothers has cruel death, coming of a sudden, snatched away! When I think of the valor that my brother's rage engendered as he smote the enemy, think of the wisdom with which that good captain controlled our allies, I realize what a great man our commonwealth wept for then. But it was not the fortune of war that snatched my mighty brother away, for time and time again he returned victorious from his encounters with our



cruel foe. Alas, harsh death, you overcome even the good. You, Pappus, were the image of my father and my son; and I have as solace, itself commensurate with an evil so great, the realization that in your victory you look with contempt upon the waters of the Styx. Yes, these places remind me of my blessed brother and move me to tears. What campaigns that hero brought to a close in those years gone by! May God Himself grant me greater success, may this place with God's blessing, be fortunate, more fortunate than in that year. And yet, even now, at this crucial moment in our campaign, this place's fort remains unfinished and deprives many of safety. If victory favors my standards in this war, I shall complete the fortification of this place which was begun earlier and make it solid with firm stone."

So he spoke, grieving for the cities forsaken by their citizens, for the houses lying empty. Overwhelmed by pity for the devastation of Libya, he groaned, ordered the cables to be set free from the shore and turned the sails to the welcome wind. Then, in time, the light of a third day presented to his eyes the sight of the Tyrian walls and returned the commander to that exhausted city.

No sooner did he set foot upon that shore than he ordered his units to disembark and assemble in the city's open spaces, instructed his captains to organize their companies in close formations and bade them to move their ensigns forward. A mighty grief stirred his wrath. He could not help but grieve for the destruction of the land he had himself seen and, grieving, set his army in motion. The young soldiers stirred themselves in obedience to his commands, and, casting aside their sluggishness, moved quickly here and there. All the warriors took up their swords and eagerly made ready for war. The harsh-sounding songs of the brazen trumpet kindled the flames of bitter battle. From nine wide gates their units rushed out in line, and all the walls disgorged armored companies. From this side came the cavalry; from that, by a thousand different paths, the slower infantry were moved out, and the dry earth groaned beneath their marching feet. This is the way the ruler of

that small but beautiful kingdom breaks his camp and orders the dense swarms of bees to come out of their hives and advance their formation in search of golden wax. He either prepares for battle, if he happens to be stirred by anger with a rival commander, or he flies fast in his eagerness to keep off the trouble-making drones. One after another, his hastening warriors, respecting his commands, leave the hive by all of its openings and taunt their enemy with their harsh buzzing. Not otherwise did John's soldiers march out of every part of Carthage into the plain, rejoicing to advance with standards high. Here a thick crop of brazen regiments bristled. Some carried bows and quivers, while on the broad shoulders of others shining armor resounded. Spears and shields glistened along with heavy breastplates and towering crests. A strange cloud of dust was churned up by them into a thick mist, the tread of hooves stirred the enduring earth, and a smoke-like cloud of rising dust enveloped the air. Among the foremost, encouraging his ranks, the commander rode and by recalling the old battles fought in Persia set afire the captains who bore the arms they had borne then. How else could he enkindle the spirits of those heroes but by praising the work of war? Thus even Jupiter, as the ancient poets tell in pagan song, when violent Phlegra stood in arms at the rebellion of the Giants, instructed the heavenly companies what fate required: by what stroke of his thunderbolt his power would lay the earthborn race low, with what spear Mars would transfix and dash their limbs, how at the Gorgon's sight, Athena would turn them into mountains, with what dense flight of arrows Apollo would wreak their destruction and which ones swift Diana would fix with her twisted bow.

Then, over the broad plains of Byzacium the army hastened on its way to the place which our ancestors called the Camp of Antonius. Here John had just pitched his camp when the ambassadors of the enemy tyrant arrived. The noble leader ordered them to be called into his tent to deliver the message of their cruel lord. Thereupon, in answer to his command, Maccus, who knew the Roman tongue,



replied: "The great-souled commander of the fierce Laguatan nation, the hero, Antalas, son of Guenfan, ordered us to say this to you: John, you whom the Massylian force knew in the time of Solomon, our bane, you who were a neighbor of our land, former guardian of the nearby sands along the sea, did you not hear how many of the troops of Solomon fell with us in that hard combat? Did you not hear how the slaughtered Roman forces filled the rivers, how many of your men were cut down and strewn in the fields? Have you no knowledge of your leader's ugly death in combat? And do you now dare to attack tribes unconquered before? Do you not know what mighty warriors the Ilaguas are, a people whose ancient and undying reputation is so celebrated? Maximian, who subjected the world to Roman rule and was Emperor of the Latins, had experience of their ancient ancestors in war. And do you now, yourself poised on the brink of destruction, dare even to face my companies with this puny force? Will you be able to endure their mighty hands or, my Roman commander, even confront the faces of my men on the battlefield? Turn around instead, pick up your standards and retreat, in fear for your life. But if you imagine that you can undertake battle against me, if it is your pleasure to sink beneath the shades, and your last day now calls you, then why do you make your standards weary with delay? Send word to me of your fixed intention, and I shall come wherever you wish and delay fate no longer. Such was the message that brave commander gave us. Now send back whatever reply you please."

Then, calm and dignified, unmoved by anger against the enemy, the commander replied: "I need not answer this savage adversary now. However, the days are numbered within which I must make the message of your cruel tyrant bear fruit. I shall give my own message to you later." So he spoke and ordered them held in private custody, while he prepared his own brave deeds. Who could have hoped that there was still a chance of safety for those men? How great was the patience of that mighty leader, how great his sense of duty and ability to command! The hearts

of the barbarians swelled and were inflamed with mad fury, but he showed clemency and tempered his acts with a Latin dignity. He had no desire to take vengeance on the proud by killing them at once but desired instead to rescue the lowly and raise up the oppressed. The virtue that is Rome's remains thus and will always remain. It preserves those it seizes and promises them release from its ire.

When Lucifer rose from the ocean's waters and brought with him that fire that turns the earth red with its rays, the commander ordered the entire camp to be broken and gave the command for the close-ranked phalanxes to march out. Sounding the signal with its mournful blast, the cruel trumpet sent dread songs from its brazen hollow and drove sweet sleep from the soldiers' breasts. As their shouts threw their bivouac into a scene of confused activity, they instilled courage in their allies<sup>3</sup> and encouraged their companions. Their servants tore from the ground the tents they had pitched, led the horses with their ornate trapping from their high stalls and picked up all of the spears. But when the battle line began to advance with its companies in order, when it began to display its victorious eagles on the field, then the commander himself, his heart filled with benevolent care, positioned all of his units<sup>4</sup> and admonished his captains, laying out the situation and giving them instructions: "Oh Roman band, surest hope of our realm, you who grace the world with gallantry, our greatest solace, loyal bulwark of the empire and of our trials the reward, perhaps you know how much trust we can place in this nation. Nevertheless, let me recall their treachery, their fraud and guile, foretell what must be feared and reveal what we have to accomplish. A tough battle with these people has never lacked evil deceit. No, the Moors' frontline of troops has always waged war through treachery, lying in wait, confident in their hidden arms. It is falsehood alone that preserves the Massylian power and makes them fight like cowards, as long as the rocks on the mountain peaks or the rivers with their steep banks provide a place for ambush, in all the places where the gray olive stretches, forming a grove, or the oak with the leafy top of its



high branches convinces their force to lurk in some camouflaged clearing. With deceits like these the Moor strives to join in battle, so that falling swiftly on his unsuspecting enemy, he may terrify him and crush him in his confusion, relying on his own numbers and on the place and trusting in his trained steeds. His next clever move is to send a single warrior into the open plain alone to provoke a battle and, by fleeing at the sight of the enemy, to increase the number of his pursuers. Moving fast, he shakes his iron-tipped spear and never stops turning his closely reined horse in circles. But when the enemy rushes out, then he skillfully flees and shrewdly scatters their ordered squadrons, until a numerous band follows, considering itself victorious and spreading its column wide across the fields. No warrior, the Mazax enters combat playing treacherous games like these until he leads the opposing column into the enemy ambush where it is trapped in some blockaded valley. Then his guile is revealed and, once cruelly unleashed, will rouse the confederate bands hidden on all sides. Whomever bitter fear afflicts, he flees in the first moment of confusion, and then, in his arrogance, the Moor finishes him with a cruel wound, for the foe's fear itself makes him fearless. But if with steadfast strength the men stand firm, then no band will pursue those who dare to fight. Instead, they turn and bend the obedient necks of their horses. This is the way they leave battle. You see then how a line that flees falls and how the steadfast will resist. Fortune will overwhelm the fearful and aid those who are both wary and bold. For it revisits many again and again, and many have carried off the palm of victory from perilous actions of this sort. Let each of you, cautious, brave and fierce as captains should be, display his might in the battle's crisis. Let this be the job your fighting spirit takes on. Order your advancing lines in companies and, positioning your regiments, move all your standards forward. More than anything else, be careful about carrying out this most important duty: serve your watches in turn. In this way you will conquer the enemy. In his turn let each of the tribunes and, from time to time, the captains go out in front

of the camp to make reconnaissance of the suspicious valleys and to control the avenues of easy approach. In this way the whole army will be secure. For the enemy does not take a vigilant commander by surprise nor him who is protected by his own guards. But if the Moorish force, as is its custom, prepares for war with some hidden guile, let a swift messenger on horseback bring this to my ears first and then quickly stir our vigilant cohorts to action. Observe these things, my captains and hope for real safety."

The commander had just finished when the broad rank of officers responded with an auspicious shout. They praised him and applauded, gave their assent and rejoiced in their hearts as they joyfully carried out his commands.

#### Book II

In the days that followed, the Moors, who were wreaking devastation, were driven from the entire region and in their fear were crushed by the enemy they faced. They fled in terror and left the besieged cities deserted. Their fear threw them into confusion and so they took refuge on the mountain heights. They set up and fortified their grim huts in the forests, and the hollow valleys and the sloping hills were filled with their innumerable tribes. Far and wide they covered the fields and the winding rivers. The neighboring land lay hidden beneath their close-ranked columns; the mountains and the upland forests with their leafy shelter were covered by their hanging huts. All the animals fled from these places in fear of the hunting spears of the cruel Moors; nor were they able, poor creatures, to escape the great plague that afflicted them, but lay fallen with weapons fixed in their breasts. The gentle bird could hang its sweet nest neither in the highest nor the middle branches, for the Moors wove reeds together in the trees to make themselves a thick roof. Now no mountain peak remained unoccupied. It was just as when the earth is covered with an enveloping frost and lies hidden beneath a cloud. The fields and the mountains



and all the trees grow white and the air is constrained in its movement. Then the unmistakeable appearance of things is snatched away by frequent storms and the stars can be recognized in none of their constellations.

What poet with originality and skill will order for me so many people and tribes, so many battles? You, Justinian, graciously teach me everything and make me one with the Muse and her seductive sweetness. Let her temper my song, that bends beneath strange words as it barks such brutish names in a barbaric tongue.

Provoked by the death of his brother, Antalas, prince of the Moors, was the first to go to war. Once subject to the Roman imperial court, he was a favorite of the captains and loyal companion of our own leaders. Now, raging like a fiend, he lifted his tough right hand and advanced to battle on every front, wherever, like a whirlwind, he drove all his bronze-clad tribes on to the prizes of war. When peace had been agreed upon in Libya, he had been loyal and had remained so for a full ten years. Alas, what a war did the poor judgement of that ignorant leader bring about then and what fires, but recently extinguished, did it make flame up again! The madness of war, tentative at first, took root. Anger provided the cause of his perfidy and the seeds of that wholesale slaughter. Fiercer than ever, he set in motion the bitter tribes of Libya and threw the whole world into confusion with the bloodshed he caused. The Frexes followed him, their kindred bands in close formation, and with their proud necks high, saluted their leader. They were a brave race, hardened in might and savage in the tumult of war, whether on the battlefield they advanced boldly through their enemy on foot or struck with their heels the shoulders of their raging horses. The swift bands of cavalry who rode with Sidifan also carried arms from that region. Confident in his mount, their savage captain swept through the middle of their ranks, then roused and drove the armed phalanx on relentlessly. He was a man whom no one had ever beaten and he hurtled now this way now that over the broad plain. Here came the cohorts of the Sinusdisae speeding into the fray and

with them the savage Silvacaë, the Naffur in their cruel arms and the wild Silcadinet, who in the remote glens of tall forests made ready a kind of warfare that was fearful for its treachery. They would strike fear into their enemy with their ambushes and then sweep onward in a rage, bold but blind. Next came those who inhabit the mountains of Gurubum and its evil valleys, the hills of Mercury and Ifera with its dense forests. With them stern Autiliten, no gentler than his father in bold deeds, rode as a combat commander, a faithful companion to none. He let loose the mighty reins of criminality, setting everything around him afire, plundering, savage that he was, slaughtering and dragging out his captives. Next came the nomad Silvaian and the Macares, who live secure beneath the shade of a projecting cliff and build their crude huts on high mountain precipices and in thick forests. The swift Caunes and Silzactæ followed, between whom the Vadara lets the waters of its current flow, where from a mountain peak it guides its stream between curving banks and their meadows, spreading it as it flows over broad and level fields. The nations which Agalumnus supports came to the battle, Agalumnus which you can see lifting its lofty peak amid the clouds and Macubius, which holds up the very stars of the wide sky. Next came those whom Sascar nourishes, binding up the thorny land's pityful sheaves of barley with thick stalks. And summoned from lands far away, the Astrices gathered, with Anacutatur, Celianus and Imaculas. The grim warriors whom bristling Zersilis supports with its narrow fields unholy Gallica lost no time in sending, and plains that would prove unlucky dispatched an unending stream of men whom their nurse Tillibaris received from the Talalatean fields and for whom Marta, the mother of all evil, extended their desert land until it reached the sea. The Roman band would have avoided the sight of those sad fields, had fate, which is often hostile even to the good, granted the breaking of its deadly threads. That, Almighty Father, was Your pleasure, however, and the object of Your commands.



A messenger riding to the farthest regions of Libya, summoned these invincible tribes to a battle far away from their homes. The Ilaguas, who had never been conquered before, gathered in innumerable thousands and, sweeping forward, terrified the whole world. The savage Austur, letting out their horses' reins and relying upon their brute strength, followed them, the Austur, men brave in arms and in number beyond all counting. The Austur warrior, who hesitates to join in a doubtful battle on the open plains, will draw together his camels, build his walls and trenches and place his various flocks in a tight protective ring so that he can entangle his battling enemy with such barriers and crush him in his confusion. It is at that moment that the cruel Ilaguas run to the slaughter and lay low the ranks that are trapped within their narrow barricades. Then, wreaking devastation, they approach the plains in security, pursue their foe and press on with renewed bloodshed, as they rage through the wretched ranks of the enemy. They also have the ram, an engine of hideous warfare, and set up tents decorated with the ensigns planted before them. They are a horrid tribe of hardy men who have been made bold by countless triumphs and who, both cruel and unholy, never desist from making war. They fear no destruction, although they might well have feared and will nevertheless rightly and justly<sup>5</sup> grieve for having pursued their madness so long. For in time the brave Ilaguas, finally laid low by a wound received on these broad plains, surrendered his cruel lances<sup>6</sup> and refrained at last from plundering and war. Fierce Ierna was the tribe's leader and the priest of Gurzil. The people tell that horned Ammon is this god's father and a wild heifer his mother. Such is the madness of their blind minds! Ah, this is the way their divinities deceive these poor people! Then came the Ifuraces who are skilled in the use of their deadly arms. Soldiers noted for their shields and weapons and powerful at swordplay, they leap up and down as they make their way toward a fierce enemy. The Muctunian band, which inhabits the wastes of Tripoli, descended from its steamy homeland, Gadabis sent men from its evil citadel and

unholy Digdiga, bristling with cruel fortifications, provided a front-line unit from the neighboring land. Then gathered the tribes who sweep over the lakes in their Velanidean boats, skimming over the water skillfully and tossing their bent hooks at the trembling fish. The Barcaeï, frenzied as ever, lost no opportunity to go on the rampage. They deserted their own lands and prepared to make for ours. War and its fury and their own hardy stock put weapons in their hands. They do not bind their shields and menacing swords to their sides in the accustomed manner; rather a bracelet rings their arms tightly with its little circle and in this way they fit their sheaths to hang from their bare limbs. The Moors neither cover their arms with a tunic's sleeve nor fasten belts with studs of any kind around them. Ungirt, they drive their wild companies into battle, carrying a pair of spears with blades of special strength. A shaggy garment, hanging from their bound-up limbs, droops from their shoulders, while a linen cloak is drawn over their foul heads and supported by a tight knot, and their black feet tread upon crude Moorish sandals.

Such was the number of the Marmaridan tribes which Africa endured in this war. Who would imagine that the poor land could survive? But even this was not enough, oh powers above! For now the bold leader from the other end of Africa rose up in the lands on the opposite flank. He was seething with indignation over the destruction the Roman army had earlier wreaked upon him in bloody combat. Yes, that was the source from which that savage leader summoned his mighty wrath. Countless tribes accompanied him as he went, those who dwell in Gemini Petra and in the overgrown outlands of Zerquilis, those who inhabit the awful mountains and wastes of gloomy Navusum and those whom the untended land of abominable Arzugis nourishes. (For these are the names the ancients assigned to these places.) The Aurasitanian band came down from its highlands too. Their units cannot engage in combat as infantry but they put up a powerful fight as horsemen. They fix their two-ended lance with sharp blades in sturdy juniper, and often a glistening short



shield lies lightly on their brawny backs or falls dangling to their sides, while a blade as bright as lightning, attached by a cord, hangs from their left shoulders. Beside them the Moorish ploughman who twice in the year harvests the crops of balmy Vadis and twice ties his barley sheaves up with straw, raged, alas, over the dry sands that must endure their burning sun. How great indeed is the love of spoil, when this farmer will bear the scorching sun, suffer hunger and thirst and the glowing heat of the land, all for the love of savage war and the desire for foul profit!

Now the brave Roman army, as it hastened on, saw that this close-ranked enemy was on the tops of all the hills and mountains, that the terrain was enveloped in smoke and flame and that the forests, now hidden by thick lines of soldiers, seemed to be without horizon. All their huts lay hidden and on all sides their voices sounded through the air in a continuous savage roar. You would have thought that groves and echoing forests were being moved by the approach of a powerful storm or that ocean breakers were being dashed against the shore. On this side the shouts of soldiers arose, on that the wild neighing of horses. The tremulous howling of women struck the air and the earth itself boiled up in a restless upheaval. And look, a line of shepherds comes out of the valleys, fleeing as the enemy arrives. The bleating of their sheep echoes over the pastureland as a thick dust rises from the sand. And now a single horse, his reins let loose, keeps running over the plain in a gallop, and is the first to seize his spoil as the grazing herds are driven off. To cut the animals off, here come, see, a few scattered enemy warriors out of those deadly ravines. You can see how they advance without formation of any kind. Nor did they in their wrath seek any challengers, but, hollering, they put on a display of ferocity, after which they shook their cloaks again and summoned their bands from the forest, calling their squadrons to their aid as the Moors always do. Next the swift Frexes dashed forward all together, ready for the first contest in this light skirmish. They

were nothing more than fugitives at heart, men who merely watched the flocks and never really stood firm as a company in arms.

It was at that moment, however, that blood was in fact shed and the war began, for the powerful captain Geisirith had advanced beyond our main column at the general's command in order, along with wise Amantius, to explore the hostile strongholds, to search out the valleys and, as was their custom, to choose an easy route for the army's advance. Now, on a lofty mound, the Roman lines took their stand. They watched with expectation for the abominable tribes and wondered what they might have to endure for their great leader, for they had no stomach for this guerilla warfare or for scouting densely covered terrain. Who could, after all, bear to look upon so many thousand men? The foe was as numerous as locusts in the starlit sky, who fall under the wind's blast, scattered over the Libyan fields, when spring ends or when the heaven-borne south wind bids whatever it has snatched up in its mighty whirlwind to plunge headlong into the sea. On that day the hearts of anxious farmers tremble with fear, lest a dreadful catastrophe destroy their crops, lay waste the tender orchards and flourishing gardens or injure the olive as it bursts into blossom from pliant shoots. The Roman soldiers turned now and rode to bring a report to their commander. But the enemy closed in and surrounded them with its highly mobile force. The tough columns drew close now as the enemy gathered from their mountain hiding places in a tight formation and spread out over the fields from the mouths of all the passes. Among them were the Austur and the Mutunian band who launched the assault, hot for combat in their invincible arms. The brave Ilaguas joined the formation and now the front line was shifted even closer to the hostile Roman force and swept forward on its countless steeds. It created instant confusion and, as it applied pressure, swelling with ever denser ranks, it overcame our men. The battlefield was hedged in by the very spears and the earth was shaken by the mighty tumult, just as when the winds drive the racing clouds along with a mighty



rumble. Then the rain cloud glows with frequent flashes of lightning, and the oncoming storm sweeps in with heavy and driving stones of awful hail; and the cold traveller, lashed by rain and wind, bends his sad face to the earth and grinds his teeth. Beaten now, he turns his back and, making for a safe place, runs to the forests and their shelter. This is the way the Roman horsemen retreated, overcome by the heavy pressure the enemy applied. Although his well known bravery might be aroused by his will to accomplish brave deeds, still the enemy that gathered to thwart the Roman soldier were too numerous. Our men were able to scatter from their hands neither their spears nor their slender javelins. And the sword alone was hardly strong enough to drive the enemy warrior off in combat. Indeed they scarcely had the strength to withstand his deadly blows with their shields. A grim clamor struck the sky, and the soldiers' shields as they were held up for protection, groaned again and again under the blows of the weapons they deflected. Life was harried by unspeakable dangers until, at last, little by little, the Roman force struggled to extricate itself from the fight and strove to take the hills opposite them.

In the meantime a swift messenger had assailed the Romans' untroubled ears with his message, throwing our camp into confusion and great turmoil as he did. He reported that the savage enemy had come down from the forests and mountains in numbers past counting, that their fearful battle line had filled the plains, that the region was besieged by men and bristling arms and that the captains might have already given way in an action of such magnitude. In an instant all of our horsemen rode out onto the open plain. They were impelled by patriotism and passion and awe of their commander. In a frightening voice, he urged and drove them forward from behind, now and then striking with his spear whomever he saw giving way. He ordered his troops to leave their camp and commanded them to bring aid to their comrades. As he marshalled the light cavalry in the open plain and galloped out in front of his own captains, he rebuked those who lingered in the camp and roused

them with the sound of the brazen trumpet. The horrible battle horn, stirring them again and again, wailed in tremulous song and their battle line followed, formed into many regiments. The horses' hooves clouded the shimmering plain with dust, as the sun's majesty grew dull and retracted its flashing rays. The vault of heaven was blurred by the sand rising to meet it, just as when the rushing east wind rises from the mountains of Aeolus and howls mightily. Then storms sweep the sandy shore and make the air turbulent with their grim blasts as they shred the clouds with their oncoming gusts. This is the way the Roman line, with its close-ranked units, threw the plains into confusion and halted the enemy they had not yet reached with the cloud of dust they raised. Watchful Melangus saw them coming, from behind the rock formations opposite and, breaking up his squadrons with a mighty cry, hollered his barbaric commands. Then, in small bands the Moors began to leave the plain and their force hid in the safety of their camp.

As he arrived surrounded by a group of guards, the brave commander saw the enemy standing on the mountain tops and was glad to receive his own men back safe and with joy in their hearts. Then they told the story of the grim and savage battle that their band had waged amid so many cruel dangers, told the story of those ill-starred mountain passes. John himself instructed them to locate their camp and its trenches not at a distance but fairly close to the enemy that faced them. Swiftly they carried out his instructions and before long fixed their tents, white with snowy canvas, on the level plain. Here the Roman army, well fortified now in its pitched camp, went about its different tasks. Some stacked their towering arms in place again, others refilled quivers and restrung bows. Still others raised the canvas of the taller central tents on their towering poles. Then they fixed their spears in order on the soft ground and, as soldiers do, rested their shields against them in the grassy area of the camp. They fitted heavy breastplates and helmets with fastened thongs, as some piled up missiles and other weapons of all sorts. Another group eagerly



rounded up the horses and brought them the portion of fodder they had earned. And here a man experienced in the preparation of meals dashed about placing cauldrons on the fire and seeing to the food. One man trapped cool spring water in a basin while still another prepared curved couches on the grass and set out all the platters in their places, getting them ready for the banquet by washing them in running water.

Meanwhile the great commander kept turning over in his heart his many different cares, considering at the same time the tribes and their lands and also the captives, whom, Africans themselves, the war had involved with the rebel tribesmen and seduced, poor creatures, with the hope of booty. He was on fire with anxiety and again and again turned over in his mind what he should do in this crisis of doubt. Even now his great courage argued preparations for battle but his sense of duty bade him to forbear, lest, as seemed likely, he destroy in a critical action the very captive people for whom he had taken up arms. Without sleep his senses wandered, leaping from one alternative to another, his mind now making a decision, now opposing it. Battle raged in his heart; duty and anger clashed. He was like a farmer who, when he sees his fields bearing crops mingled with thorns, is sad at heart and takes care to pull the baneful weeds from his field as quickly as he can. But the thought of his crop still disturbs him and he is afraid as he considers what his losses will be if the ill-scattered thorns should choke his barley, if his sad crop should not, as he hopes, meet its end at harvest. This is the way the paternal commander weighed these cares one after the other in his heart, balancing all in the scale of reason, to see under which weight his mind would sink, to determine what he should do. He could neither tarry nor sit in pleasant conversation. Speaking not a word, he sighed and sighed again as his troubled and hesitating breast gasped for breath. He got up and decided to wrestle with his problems in the middle of the camp, and so, exhausting both his mind and body, kept passing up and down its paths.

Afire with similar cares, great-souled Ricinarius, the commander's esteemed lieutenant, a man exceedingly kind and the glory of John's counsel, accompanied the hero as he went, never leaving his side. John kept him as his trusted confidant and companion in the midst of cruel dangers, a hero in his courage and a comfort in his discretion. He rejoiced even in moments of triumph, at the end of a war, that this man had borne with him so many heavy burdens and that they had come together to the crowning experience of battle. This was the spirit in which his companion went along beside him, a man with the same burden of sighing cares, and one who would calmly offer him the solace of his conversation.

"My emotions," the commander said, "waver amid these dangers that surround us, and my heart gasps amid anxieties as it takes thought about our best chance for safety in this uncertain situation. That which involves great loss is not a victory. If the things for which I came to war perish, what then is the profit of victory? Everything entails troubles and wears me down. On the one hand these people threaten us with sad loss, on the other they are eager to diminish our glory. By stirring our sense of duty they take from our hands the triumphs we have already gained. If we decide to fight, the African hostages die, mingled with the native tribes. Then what will be the glory of our deeds, if we sacrifice these poor folk? And yet, no enemy is defeated as things now stand. Advise me what strategy to employ in the crisis of this grave war, tell me what must be done." Calmly the hero Ricinarius replied, speaking briefly in a clear voice: "Courage that weighs all things with proper moderation, that is what is most important, that is what is pleasing and can alone conquer and impose order on these tribes. It is better, great commander, to restrain your great courage with holy piety. Then, whatever you do, the victory is ours. It is this that order, that all things teach us. Now we must send ambassadors to the harsh tyrant with promises of peace. Let them reclaim the hostages and bid the mad Austur to depart from our land and the land of the savage nation of Ilaguas. And



let the Ilaguas themselves bear with bent neck our Emperor's yoke which they have customarily been forced to endure. If they depart all will be saved. Without incurring blame, you may forgive the tribes, and a peaceful victory will then be granted to our realm. But if it happens that they stand proud and stiff-necked in rebellion, then they must be conquered with arms. Nor will there then be any cause for shame on behalf of the wretched captives. If it should happen that they fall in war, John will bear no blame. Your soul's piety will remain unstained and manifest to all of your men." The just advice of his faithful companion found favor with the hero, and the paternal commander was relieved of his cares. He was not idle,<sup>7</sup> however, for his heart was rent by the concern the second possibility raised.

He acted upon his plan in good time and ordered a swift armorbearer to carry his message to the proud tyrant. With these words he gave him instructions: "Bear my words to the rebel and strike his proud ears with these, my warnings. Even as his tribes do wrong, Roman piety forgives them, pardons all their crimes and tears up the indictment against them. It is not quick to destroy each and every tribe in battle, if only each would renounce war and, as subject, seek treaty, pardon and peace. The Emperor, acting in kindness, prefers that everything be his in a way that permits him to preserve, to maintain and to rule all by lifting up those who are subject and crushing with his power those who are proud. Just do not let terror bred of anxiety hold your hearts fast to your sins. Everything is in your favor if you return, for we shall gladly come forward to extend pardon and peace to you. These people will learn, numerous as they are, what Roman power is and what the benevolence and virtue of its rule. Poor men, what evil fortune oppresses you? Were you not always our loyal subjects and were you not accustomed to rejoice in our triumphs and bear your subjection as you should? What evil fate draws you in your pride to the savagery of war? Now, at last, forsake the havoc which in confusion you wreak upon this unhappy land. What advantage is yours, unhappy man, in provoking Roman

standards. Why do you prepare to hurl these poor people into absolute ruin? Do you think that any people in ages past were able to overcome the Roman armies? We rule the Parthian kingdom, the Lazi, the Huns, the Franks and Getae. All the savage tribes that lie scattered over the broad earth beneath the vault of heaven serve in our court, happy to put war aside, to carry out our holy Emperor's commands and to bend their necks beneath our gentle yoke. Quickly now, accept this offer and save these tribes and your own people. Not as cowards do we send a message of safety for ourselves; nor do we flee from battle or beg for peace. Our sense of duty enfolds the world, looks after your safety and fears for you and your captives, wretched as you are. This, a weighty concern to me, bids us to spare your force even as it totters on the brink of destruction. For the sake of your captives I shall be permitted to grant you pardon. But if, in the hardness of your heart, you dare what runs counter to my words, then prepare for war tomorrow. Ringing your trenches with fortifications, send out your flocks as is your custom. Throw up walls for us to take. Gather your bleating herds, your she-goats heavy with their young, your bucks that wail in their midst with glowering visage. There will be no need to dash your hollow towers by bringing up a battering ram. Quite the contrary, we shall expose our enemy by leading his ram away. Yes, amid your flocks all your rams will be ravaged and we shall breakfast heartily upon your plundered walls. Carved Gurzil, under whose protection, as the tale goes, good fortune must be granted to your army, will be hewn in two, his wooden form destroyed and cast before all into the glowing flames. As your tribes scatter, he will be sought for in the plain and on all the mountains. Whatever crime Moorish impiety has accomplished, our army will vindicate it in a just war, blanketing the plain with the warm trunks of your decapitated bodies. Then you will learn how much greater our power in battle is, you will learn, as our sword avenges the wretched Africans and your ranks fall dying into their trenches on every side."



No sooner had he finished speaking than the messenger was despatched and made his way<sup>8</sup> toward the mountains. He never lost his way but kept the enemy camp always in sight and finally penetrated to the inner circle of their tents. Then he searched for the headquarters of the cruel tyrant himself. Nightfall, moist with dew, replaced the glowing stars in the sky and the wandering planets in heaven's vault. The moon, her horn now empty, shed no light on the dark earth but was submerged in the sea along with the fire which the month had already diminished. But the quarters of the captains did not feel the darkness of the night. Across the plain bright fires burned close together on their hearths, and on the high mountain tops the horizon glowed with fire. The thick woods sent up a radiant cloud. Who would have been able on that night to distinguish the earth from the sky? Who could have told which lights were shining stars, which were campfires? Everything was filled with light; down here the earth glowed with fires, up there the vault of the sky glowed with stars. Whenever a fiery flying spark sped through the heavens, it was thought to be a star falling through the dark night sky, and anyone, seeing the tents across the plain, would shudder in his ignorance, believing that the stars were climbing to strange positions on high. And on the watery plain sailors went astray and were completely unable to recognize the constellations, until at last, turning their boats, they abandoned their journeys.

Our armed soldiers, along with the allied Moors were passing the long sleepless night on watch. Marching here and there, they would circle the trenches, ears attentive, harkening to every sound, wary lest anyone, taking advantage of the night, attempt some trick or launch an attack against an army ill-prepared. They made their rounds and guarded the tents in turn. In turn as well, still girt in armor, they enjoyed kind sleep and let their bending necks fall to their breasts. Some adjusted their shields, some the quivers they had strapped around their necks, still others held javelins and bows. They sat leaning on their swords, their heads bent to

their chests. Sleep, however, turned away from them its bountiful vessel, and fleeing, scarcely touched their eyes. Again and again they were on the point of lifting their heads but lacked the strength to do so. They closed their eyes and rolled them about, and their heads fell on their troubled breasts only to be shaken awake again. So, as some watched and took their turns and went about the task of patrolling, others, secure in the camp, enjoyed sleep with hearts at peace. The unholy deeds of war alone weighed heavily on their minds. Sleeplessness disturbed their troubled spirits and showed them various images in the night. As a soldier relaxed his limbs in gentle slumber, his first sleep would at once rush in on wings drenched with fresh dew. Then as its vessel was emptied, his breast would heave a sigh. Although far away, he would make a raid against the enemy camp from the mountain tops. He slept motionless in body but labored at making war in his mind. He would conquer his enemy and drag him away and sometimes he would deal him a wound or warily parry incoming blows with his shield held in front of him. Now his sensation and his hand were divided, now each moved in unison. He seemed to be fighting for his life in the forests, but his languishing limbs were powerless in sleep. Often his eyes saw savage war coming against him, his eyes, though closed, actually saw the struggle. On he would come, wild with anger, attempting to move his hands, only to find that they proved weak and powerless in sleep. How often did his shameful hand, its sword shaken loose, strike a comrade thinking him an enemy.

Nor was the Moorish army, as it foresaw what its situation would be in the middle of the forests, less agitated in their dreams by the hopeless futility that cruel fate had imposed. They saw their camp seized and breathed away their bitter sleep. They were powerless, could not even weep for their stolen camels, could not get up to avenge them. Rather, they saw their column scattered and running over the entire plain, saw their right hands lifted in vain. Others they beheld laid low in distant wastes by one fate or another, and any man who wanted to run found that his limbs



were powerless with fear, that they collapsed beneath the weight of sleep. A savage enemy terrified the entire army, driving his cruel blade again and again into their bodies. As a man made to avoid a deadly blow, he would strike the breast of his spouse whose head he pushed away. Then, what's more, she would be taken further away from him, for the haughty plunderer would drag her right out of the forest by her hair. And so, each one, seeing his own visions, was horrified by the sleep that shook his breast. As all night long they told tales of their baleful repose, they were terrified by what they had seen in their visions but rejoiced to find the nightmares false. Yes, how often did the men laugh at their dreams as they told the stories of these illusory battles! Poor creatures, the short time left to them was itself a source of special joy.

### Book III

Cares kept buffeting the unvanquished general's heart and, concerned as he was for his men, he refused to allow sleep to take possession of his limbs. He did not close his eyes in sweet repose but, awake all night, he carried out his duties in his central command post. His captains crowded around him in a circle, exchanging views on questions of the highest importance and passing the weary night in prolonged and wide-ranging conversation. They recalled the joys of soldiering and the grim struggles, all the things the Latin army had to undertake in its conquest of the world. They went over in order now the battles that had been well fought, now, with renewed grief, the wars badly waged. And as they told their different stories, the general happened to say: "How well I recall, comrades, the condition of Africa then, at our earlier arrival, when God's great vengeance which, in their hundredth year, would justly destroy the grim tyrant and the Vandal nation, was despatched to this savage kingdom! How great was the power with which the scoundrel Geilamir had harassed Africa, had battered and destroyed it in the days when the great general

Belisarius sent the Sidonian power into slavery and presented the captive tyrant to the city's elders! How quickly did his own mighty power conclude those countless wars and how fitting was the good fortune that followed the man! His army, I remember, sought shelter in the shade provided by the thick trees, and so the torrid heat of the fierce sun did not injure his soldiers, burning as if in scorched summer although it was autumn. And so<sup>9</sup> that grim battle was fought on sands hotter than those beneath the direct rays of dazzling Phoebus. And when peace was made and the tyrant captured, the fertility of Libya stood undiminished. I left it well supplied and well cultivated, and after my departure it remained in its normal condition and, as I recall, even improved. Fertile and abounding in crops, it grew lush and produced the olive's fruit like a spring of light along with the juice of merry Bacchus. A deep peace settled over this place. But now, what irresistible war fever, what insane fury has caught flame in these poor fields? What goddess of war moves these countless people, lashing them with a whip they have not deserved? Which of the Furies, mingling the very fire of Phaethon with their blood, has drawn near and buried everything in overwhelming collapse and devastation? Come, speak, whoever here can tell about the time we ask about.

Gentius, an outstanding man and himself an officer, replied to his commander: "Mighty guide of your captains, you whom we must venerate with well-deserved acclaim, support of this tottering land, hope of Libya, you who embody both the goodness and greatness of our triumphs, the unholy origin of this recent war is hidden from us, utterly cloaked as it is, in impenetrable obscurity. But your tribune Caecilides is from that region and would, if ordered, tell all about the reasons for this war that has begun. He can inform us about all of this, for surely a citizen knows everything that has happened in his country: people, places, the sower of mischief and the anger of former times."



Liberatus was gently asked to speak. He obeyed quickly and spoke in a clear voice: "I shall try, greatest of leaders, to report the causes of the evils you see and to obey your commands. And yet, even as I attempt to speak, a deadly flame rises up in me, cold blood throws my heart into confusion and the story comes forth with difficulty although my tongue is ready. What you are in fact bidding me to do is to bear those trials again as I recount the cruel war that Africa has endured. But because these high commands from my lord and master weigh upon me, grief get far hence from here and be vanquished by my own great daring. Such commands must be obeyed and carried out in humble fear.

In the beginning Africa felt a two-fold bane and now, once again an object of pity, it feels a two-fold ruin. The unholiness which grew greater in the world at large arose in our own land. Yes, Guenfan was the sad origin of our wretchedness in that time when savage Antalas was born. For in olden times a secure peace enfolded the entire land of Libya. Poor Africa used to rejoice to be adorned with new crowns. Farmers bound up their stacks of golden grain and Bacchus blushed as always on his vine. Bright peace decorated the teeming land with her olive trees. This peace flourished for thirty years after the birth of Antalas and so the greatest part of our world grew bright and powerful, as Lucifer, shining supreme in the wide firmament, surpassed with his stronger flame the flames of the stars. The suffering which the son of Guenfan meted out in our land, mighty Father, reserve now for his people and their children. As an infant this creature soon touched his mother's breasts with his savage lips and then, as the Fury Megaera trembled on the brink of flame in the clutches of her dreadful prophecy, rumor flew forth predicting fearful things. His father himself went to the counterfeit temple of Ammon. Asking for dreadful prophecies about his criminal son, he sacrificed in an unholy manner horrible offerings to Jupiter. Then, making for the gloomy altars of Apollo, he sought the tripods and laurel of Phoebus. Blood of the most gruesome kind imaginable was

shed upon those horrid altars, as the priestess, her head bound with fillets, slaughtered beasts of every kind and stirred the fates. First, she searched in the entrails she had torn out, examining the long coils of innards that lay exposed. She placed these ill-boding inner parts on the perpetual flame and then was seized like a wild beast and caught up by a sudden madness. Frightful to behold, she all at once turned her blades against herself and plunged them into her flesh, multiplying her wounds with repeated blows of steel as the blood gushed from her body. She lifted her head high and then, jumping up and rolling her fiery eyes about, she was compelled to twist her body in evil leaps and gyrations. A fiery hue suffused her face as it was struck by the sign of the divinity. Her neck and hair swung freely, hanging now over one shoulder now over the other. Her deep chest resounded with hoarse gasps and a confused murmur arose, mingled with words of double meaning, as sighs continued to disturb her inspired breast. In this way Vulcan gets up to start his fires and skillfully drive the swelling winds together with his folding bellows. Stirring the flames, he roughens the resounding gusts of the east wind and renews their tired storms in his furnace. Then, prophesying a wicked fate, the prophetess gave her reply in a speech filled with doom: 'Guenfan, the fates call for the ruin of the Vandals and of Libya alike and they loosen the yoke and the bit of the Moors. As your Antalas grows to manhood, every kind of madness and anger will with its torch of horror throw this wretched world into confusion. Now flaming Tisiphone begins to rage with her twisted snakes and has lifted those stiff locks on her head into the empty air. Her face grows moist with the flow of their black poison. They mar the proportions of her face with their eyes and three-pronged tongues as her temples glisten with frightening gore. I see the rivers running from the mountains with Vandal blood. Behold, your rebels set the cities of Libya afire, then seize and lock away the spoils snatched from the burnt ruins. But why, powers above, do you plan this mighty confusion, this dashing together of all things in a single moment? Why



do you want the power of the Moors<sup>10</sup> to grow? See how they will perish again. What does it profit them to have merited in so short a time a ruin produced by their own indomitable valor? This child will lift up and dash down many nations along with their very identity, and the years of his life are in the clutches of a changing fate. For weary Africa will call upon her maker, the God whom she worships and whom it is right that all men<sup>11</sup> recognize. Then the mighty leader of the Roman nation will, alas, take the initiative and send the power of the East into our part of the world. See how he frightens the entire earth with his fleets. Now, suddenly frightened, the boy, although unvanquished as yet, trembles at the arrival of the fleet, now, panting, bears his yoke. Mighty pressures curb him and yet he is on fire to break the bonds which he bears on his shameful neck. See how he breaks his chains and once again prepares war. See how many people flock to him as, still a boy, he rushes to overturn the world. What advantage can the tribes, themselves on the brink of utter destruction here, take from rising up only to see the rest of the world fall? And why does he himself rise to such a height from which he may only fall? See how he goes away from our land, proud and burdened with spoils, only to return at long last to drench, alas, fields matted with our own blood.'

As she spoke these words, fury shook her neck and twisted her face around. Suddenly she shuddered, fell silent and collapsed on the ground with a mighty crash. An indistinct murmur ran over her weary lips in much the same way that a pipe draws down a current of water in its hollow tube. At first the watery stream runs on and pours out with a gurgling sound. But if it is decided to block this current, the operator, quick at his craft, blocks the open course of the stream by swinging a barricade across it. Then the head of the water is cut off and stopped by the barrier. The current flows back to its source and the last remaining trickle flows along in a sluggish stream.

Exhilarated by these strange replies, the people rejoiced and were silent, for they were a lowly tribe. And yet, every hope and fear met in him. They protected and cherished the child as if he were sacred and took joy in the gifts of the fates which were promised to them.

The boy was seventeen when he turned his hand to ill-omened theft. A terrifying figure not unlike Cacus, who would lose his life in the arms of Hercules, he began to wander out at night. He would seize and drag off the leader and father of some flock and, lifting him by the neck, struggle in his rage to carry him away. He would lead the animal to a cave and strangle him, pressing his throat closed with his fist. Then the ram, the one hope of the fleecy herd, would fall prostrate at his feet as he panted. With unsheathed blade he would tear away the tight skin with all its great weight until the flesh lay open and exposed. The entire animal would be cut up into small<sup>12</sup> pieces so that he could twine the trembling limbs on spits and burn the ugly carcass over a scorching flame. Even as the fire burned he would attack the half-cooked meat, panting and fearless, and consume it all with savage jaws.

After that he began to act like a cruel and hardened thief, feeding his gang by the covert rustling of cattle. Then the villain enticed others to join him in theft, craftily exhorting and teaching them how to move in silence through the darkness. This thief would drag off now a whole sheepfold, now a whole herd of cattle. And he made plans to hide his spoil on high mountains and to seek out safe places to hide himself among the concealed rocks. He even dared to lie in ambush in a captured valley and then, at first unseen, provoke the Vandal army itself. How many of their leaders, how many of his opponents did he cut down with his sword, catching them in a trap in the middle of some pass! Driven by his own evil genius, the reprobate lured the barbarian squadrons out and cut them down on the open plains with his spear.



Those days were now crushing the wretched populace beneath a bitter fate, and as that fate gathered momentum, it destroyed the Vandal kingdom in its hundredth year. It was at that moment that the Frexes first began to set fire to the cities in our land, to ravage the houses and ride across our plains, even daring to engage in offensive warfare. The brave Ilaguas followed next,<sup>13</sup> setting in motion a force that they had recruited from their common folk, and the panting Naffur joined them in pressing in on the border nearby. This unholy destiny was what drove us to leave our lands and dear homes in terror. The bandit raged with such ferocity that a life of safety was nowhere assured. We suffered oppression, driven as we were by this evil fate, and our own joy perished together with the reign of the Vandals. So it happened that we had to weep in sorrow for our toppled altars and, though undeserving, seek a place of refuge.

In that time Hildimer waged war beneath standards doomed to disaster, unaccustomed as he was to fighting. He could not prevail, no matter how great his force and was unable to face an army of such great size. The threads of his unlucky fate were broken in the middle of the mountains where bad luck terrified him. That is the way things go: angry fortune often preserves those who injure the good. His enemy's proud standards had been set up on the ridges and in the forests, and its army had ringed their foe around from the rocks above. Pressed on all sides, there was no chance for them to flee, no confidence in numbers, no hope for life. The Vandal force was unable to withstand its opponents, impeded as it was by the steep rocks, whereas the enemy warriors were in fact protected by the jagged rock faces and walled around by cleft valleys. In the middle of those forests and groves there lies a sinister place, huge and fortified on all sides by broken cliffs. Although it stands out as a steep incline and rises to a lofty peak, although its cliffs are covered with thick willow groves, high along its ridges stretches the high level ground of its flat summit. There is no open road; with difficulty one trail, broken everywhere by

twisted channels, reaches the level summit high above, for the whole area is pathless and enclosed by thick forest.

When Hildimer saw the gullies hemmed in as if by fortifications and the battlefield a sheer hillside with no path, he was afraid to risk a danger so severe. At that point he himself ordered the close-ranked lines to stand fast beneath their own standards for he was uncertain about where he might launch an assault on the fortified position of the enemy. Everything went wrong; destiny was against him. The sun, pressing on its course through the middle of the sky, was now all aglow with light. As its fire began to scorch their dry throats, the unbearable heat began to take its toll on the wretched troops, and as it happened thirst drew some of them down to a cool watering place. And so the men retreated, for the stream was at that time quite far away from their positions. Their servants were in fact already carrying skins filled with the water which they had spied not far away in a hollow valley. But when the first of the Vandals reached the unlucky water and cried out in satisfaction at having relieved their thirst, then, at a run, the rest of the throng gathered at the stream. This is the way the fates were tending, you see, the way hostile fortune condemned the army to death. And see how one of the standard bearers had the audacity to believe that his standard too might be moved, and so he too turned his reins away from the mountain heights. Then the army followed him with their shields and spears all crowded together, and the broken wastes lay open. What is more, as they looked for a place to grip the rocks they had to climb down, they actually turned their backs and so their foe imagined that they were in flight. Then the enemy in turn rushed down from the mountain top. This calamity terrified everyone, even the captains. The standards were seized and turned around in flight. There was no open plain there on which a horse might run when set free, swiftly making his way across it with loosened reins. Amid the crags and rocks and towering cliffs of the mountain the men fell in fear and sank beneath their own weight. Now



their fate pressed in on the wretched soldiers as the onrushing enemy terrified them and then, when the spirit of battle took flame, took up the chase. A mighty throng fell on all sides, piercing their breasts with their own weapons. Some dashed headlong into the weapons of those falling, others the collapse of their comrades pushed backward. And so, in general confusion a crowded column rushed down from the mountain heights. In the clash of arms many a brave mount, bolting forward in the confusion of the swift retreat, fell and crushed his master beneath his own weight. This is how the oncoming hail strips the grey olive, shaking the top of the tree and knocking off its fruit. Then, in the same way, under the lashing of the storm, tender branches are shaken by the hail and dashed straight to the ground. And so, it was not the power of the enemy but envious fate which crushed the soldiers and hastened the destruction of that mighty nation.

The broken army returned here, deposed the trembling king, who was weary with years and afraid of catastrophe, and gave his sceptre to the cruel tyrant. Then the Emperor grieved for the broken alliance with our kingdom, and Rome set out for Libya to gain a victory as in the past. Nevertheless, the tally of destruction in that brief period of slaughter was high indeed, for the experience of that dreadful war was universal here. At that time Africa was in fact afflicted by a two-fold curse. On one side a seething war oppressed it, on the other a plundering tyrant. Fortune withdrew from the wretched populace the protection which security bestows as it nourishes a people and instead threatened death in one violent encounter or another. From whom should they flee? On which side should they fall? Their possessions were plundered no matter where they went. Terror surrounded the men, and all of Libya, the greatest of lands, was laid bare by savage plundering, as if it were a stricken ship perishing in uncertain winds. The Emperor, who is always concerned for his people, took pity, lifted up the plagues which beset the Punic people and brought them great relief in their weariness. In his victory, he struck down both evils and bestowed greater

honors on the rulers of Carthage. Your hand snatched the poor Africans from the jaws of death and lifted a cruel yoke from those weary people, as Africa stood tall again when your triumphs were accomplished. In the wake of our grief, you Romans gave joy to this friendly land. And as long as you restrain these tribes and hold the entire world in submission, savage men will tremble after being subdued by your power. In those days the leaders of the Moors feared your capacity to make war; each feared battle with you and ran in haste to assume the burden of your yoke of their own accord and to obey the laws of your Emperor. And so, our land was free of strain for ten whole years; it flourished then and experienced joy. Although, as fate continued to press on, rebels did arise, these enemies would fall even before they could carry off their spoil. Africa experienced neither war nor war's power<sup>14</sup> while you were vigilant, Father.

Leucadia witnessed your battles and your courage. Its fields grew rich with blood and white with bones. Heads were dashed from bodies, struck by a ploughshare, and corpses were scattered over the grass by your sword. Everyone knows what you accomplished in that war with God's favor. Indeed, who else has been able to mark the plains with such mighty trophies? You, in your greatness, graced the triumphs of Solomon with new honors, multiplying them again and again. At one point tough<sup>15</sup> Iaudas decided to try war and actually began it, but before he set eyes upon the open plains, he trembled to see the Romans charging through the middle of the forests. Stutias, one of our own men, tried war as well. What fury was his, what wrath, and what a repugnant duty fell to our otherwise loyal command! And so the civil war was revived, and Carthage, with her treaty broken, suffered cruel plundering and abominable danger in a one-sided war. And yet, this enemy too was conquered and retreated before long. Membressa saw him join battle in its own fields, saw him turn in flight as well, when mighty Belisarius laid his foe low, victorious in spite of his modest force.



And victory beheld you in the middle of the battle as well. Bravely you broke into their camp and cut down their ranks with your mighty sword. With like valor you slaughtered their men as Germanus scattered the troops of the cruel but doomed tyrant. Cellas Vatari looked upon you with a wondrous love, in much the same way as Autenti had looked upon you as you cut down its cruel enemies.

Then a prosperous tranquility fell over our land. No war, no greedy plunderer, no avaricious soldier approached our rustic houses. No one tried to steal our possessions, and the soldier, innocent of war, took joy in his own home. There was prosperity everywhere, and a secure peace settled over the world of Libya. Then Ceres was fruitful, then the vine was rich with grapes and the dappled trees shone with jewel-like olives. The farmer began to plant new shoots in all of his gardens. Rejoicing, he led out his oxen, yoked them to the plow and seeded his fields, all the time singing a carefree song on the mountainside. The untroubled traveller dared once more to sing a song to the moon, and our tranquil peace was rich in resources. Everywhere the merchant sang, and sweet songs and lilting voices echoed throughout a land secure. Here the joyful ploughman sang, there the merry traveller, for the Muses enchanted them and lifted the hearts of men in various tunes. Our liberty was complete but only for a short time. For the threads of fate are envious of the wretched world. Why, Lachesis, do you allow the fates of men to dangle by such a thin strand? Why do you shake them so lightly? Now indeed the fate of our world was dashed.

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You will return it either to the brave or to chains of bronze or iron.

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Terror, driving all before it, would press in and anger would not break....

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Now an Africa restored had prepared new forces.

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[The plague] had begun to destroy both men and women and the tottering world around them. It came to our land and took fire. Never before had so sad a sound of death been heard, not at the birth of the unformed earth, not in the time of Pyrrha. That deadly year even roused the poor shades and mingled them with earthly portents. Men saw themselves suffering the wounds of divine arrows, saw various plagues and fearful visions arise from the bowels of the earth. Bitter death held no terror now, and men, whatever their ages, closed their eyes in death without fear. People were even denied bitter tears; not an eye wept as long as every man feared for himself. No one rendered the dead due service, no grief resounded in the city.<sup>16</sup> Groom did not mourn his bride, nor bride her groom. Parent did not mourn a child, nor children a parent. Oh, curse the hearts which wept not for all this strange death. It called for public mourning, but in not a single house did eyes pour forth tears. The death of those days was trifling to all. And so the empty cities no longer served their Libyan inhabitants, and in many a mansion scarcely a single man was left wandering alone, to claim in a tedious process his father's wealth. Without any right to inherit, individuals found themselves heirs to a multitude of parents and were all at once bursting with wealth. Even strangers stole the patrimony of ancestors, the crops, silver, clothing, gold, all together, greedily filling their homesteads with all these things. A treasure chest would be heaped full with the contents of great family shrines and yet, for the truly avaricious, this contemptible passion was never sated. They were on fire for grotesque unions, for marrying powerful widows, even as maidens received no bridegroom's proposal. The wife of a dead husband was sought after for her wealth but a maiden was given but a small dowry. And so, in that fearful time, no woman took care to pay the grief due to her husband.

All kinds of courts were opened, vindictive legal actions introduced. Discord raged throughout the land, giving rise to cruel disputes. Piety withdrew entirely, and



no man, goaded by his conscience, pursued justice. It was for this reason that the Almighty Creator, as his anger bade Him, delayed no longer to apply the lash to that wretched populace and in His wrath denied the fulfillment of their prayers. He raised up an enemy who had grown to manhood in our own land. This same Antalas was heart sick and grieved for the death of his brother, but he lacked the requisite power to rise to preeminence. Nevertheless, even as he fed a secret longing for war in his heart, his wretched fate did allow him to sense that the once countless military units opposing him had dwindled in number, while the plague, an ally of the war, had not afflicted the rancorous tribes themselves. But still he remained afraid and took precautions against contracting the evil contagion in the plundered land. When the pest was driven off, however, his passion for war began to take flame in earnest and he drove his cursed army to war. He sent to the farthest deserts of thirsty Libya, where Phaethon once scorched the earth with too much sunlight and was cast down by a thunderbolt. There he gave instruction to the inhabitants' already evil inclinations, filling their ears with the proposed slaughter of our men. And now those savage tribes spilled into the Libyan realm. Everywhere the unrestrained bandits began to overrun our land, to lay waste our homesteads, set fire to our houses and, themselves on fire, set our cities aflame.

When Solomon saw that a major war was breaking out, he gathered the Roman force from every side and rushed to meet the fates that threatened him. A message whose contents would prove unfortunate, was sent at once. The Moors' general, mighty Cusina, a friend of unlucky Solomon who had always been a loyal ally of the Roman Empire, was stung by the prospect of an unequal contest and, see, rushed forward with all the might his own Mastracian forces could provide.<sup>17</sup> Bold Pelagius, who was then the commander in Tripoli, joined him as well. It was not, however, with a lucky band that he came, drawing those tribesmen, the tough Mecaes, with him to war. Unaware of their guile, he even took under his command

the false Ifuraces. Fortune, your purpose is always obscure, whenever you threaten us. Alas, unhappy Solomon, should you have linked these forces to your own?<sup>18</sup> But he who is lured on by an unlucky fate always does what is wrong. No one can avoid the doom that pursues him.

The final day had now arrived in our lands. Now the fate that threatened was hastening to destroy Libya. But, unafraid and confident in his own force, our general met the enemy in the middle of the forests and attacked them. And he would have conquered his foe, for their retreating lines were even then turning their backs in fear. He himself, hot for victory, rode amid the enemy and pursued their routed squadrons this way and that when suddenly this fair promise was broken. Fortune turned her fair face away and Lachesis snapped her thread. Injured Victory turned her wings and fled. In that moment grim fate found its assistant. Guntarith, our bane, threw terror into our ranks and was able to turn the Roman army entirely. It was not threatening fortune, nor the enemy, nor bitter and driving fear that overwhelmed our beaten army, however, but that single villain who deliberately turned, moved his battle standards and pretended to flee. When the entire force turned and saw him, apparently frightened and in flight, it followed, leaving its general on the field, fighting in the middle of the trenches. This harsh fate renewed the ferocity and power of the enemy at once; but to our men it gave death and fear and unseemly flight, which almost always brings men destruction and disgraceful death. The bitter enemy pursued them in a rage, braver now with their shields and spears densely packed together again. And as the panic increased, Solomon, alas, his breast pierced by pitiless steel, suffered a death he did not deserve. At that point every semblance of order disappeared. As the fury of battle took hold of the men, not a single soldier remained loyal to his cause, but rather the entire allied force ran after plunder even as the fighting continued. Then sad ploughmen wept as they fled, to see the enemy unyoke their bullocks and drive them away, and all of the houses were destroyed with



all they contained. The poor were not alone the victims of this disaster for they sank beneath it with the rich beside them. Then, after the destruction of Solomon's power, there was freedom to plunder and no part of the land was secure from evil war. On all sides, in a frenzied rage, the bandits set fire to cities and fields. Nor did the crops and trees alone perish in these flames, for whatever escaped that bane the herds consumed. All of Africa was downtrodden by Moorish lords. Oh, for our grief then! No unit of ours could take a stand in the plains, no soldier could defend enclosing walls. God Himself was angry and so everything we owned was turned over for pillaging. And the traitor Stutias once again rode into the combat with Antalas his lord. Tyrant now, he earned the right to roam about plundering at will all that lay under the rule of his Moorish master.

#### Book IV

I take no joy<sup>19</sup> in recalling the name of the unspeakable tyrant. You can see the overwhelming grief that wells up in my innermost marrow and makes me shudder. My mind reels and I can scarcely bring myself to remember the great number of captains who died, to recall my misfortunes and my men's. The disloyal troops forced our frightened soldiers to hand over our standards to traitors. It would take a long time indeed to recount our downfall in detail, but I can at least narrate the chief acts of aggression in that combat with some accuracy.

The general Himerus, the protector of our besieged city, was guarding the closed walls and lofty towers with his soldiers. Treachery drew some of his wretched men from the center of these fortifications and handed them over to the service of the Moors. A letter, plausible but containing in fact an unlucky message, had been written in the name of the area commander and sent from the capital city. A soldier, another Sinon, entered and announced that it came from John. We read what was the message of the tyrant himself, believing it to be from our own commander. In this

communication, assuming the role of our general, he repeatedly urged us to hasten to an encounter in the middle of the open plain and to break down the sprawling fortifications of the Moors. In their confusion, the officers were deluded and so we gave orders for our standards to be moved. More swiftly than the silent wind our own leader rode out and with him the cavalry galloped through the shadowy night to link their standards to those of their allies as quickly as they could. Indeed the soldiers even feared that they acted too sluggishly. The villainous Sinon dashed out before them to prepare his people and their treachery. And so, when grim Phoebus made his fiery steeds rise from the chill waves, their treachery was manifest. Then, alas, poor fools, we saw the standards of the tyrant coming to meet our own and saw the wild Moors riding like madmen across the entire plain. We retreated in fear, for who could have withstood them? Antalas and raging Stutias pursued our frightened units over the field. There was no way to safety. The close-ranked enemy pressed in and encircled our terrified men. Death stood before their eyes and cruel fortune denied them aid. Oh if only the dead had lain in the middle of that field honorably, if only unworthy shame had remained far from our army! But as it happened, those brave horses were forced to run in flight across the broad plain. Their hooves resounded with the rapid beating of horn, and the savage enemy drove off our frightened warriors, swooping down on them from the mountains. Cebar commanded a lofty secondary garrison on that open plain. To it our pitiful band turned its horses' reins. This fortress the cavalry held along with their disappointed officers, and even the general stood in their midst. We did not worry about closing our gates but instead kept our horses safe inside and formed a perimeter for an infantry action. Thus we drove the enemy back from the walls as they advanced. Then, as a throng of other men gathered, the two tyrants rushed in. The Laguatan cohort and the Naffur followed them bristling with arms. At that point, Stutias, pretending that he would put a stop to the savage battle, flew like a fiery bolt between



the lines with his sword drawn. Shrewdly he directed the Moorish beasts to leave the field and restrained the wrath they had whipped up with cries both guileful and grim. They rode off, but the duplicitous scoundrel, feigning a peaceful intent, stood on a lofty mound and moved the wavering hearts of our men with his cunning words. At one and the same time he predicted civil war and urged and exhorted them with various tricks to engage in it themselves. He was present everywhere, now threatening, now persuasive. Compelled by terror, the men threw down their arms, swiftly ran to the tyrant's knees and greeted him with friendly words. And so, the commanders could provide no salvation now. Why must I repeat it all? We asked for pardon; it was granted at once. We forced the enemy to swear by their lives. They did so. Under pressure, we pretended that we would serve the villainous tyrants, and the city of Justinian was handed over to the cruel Moors and its own uncertain fate. Afterwards I was given the opportunity to bend the minds of some of my companions with my words. Maturius too was filled with sensible counsel and between us we compelled their wayward spirits to return to their own standards. And so the men agreed to leave<sup>20</sup> that ill-omened camp and attempt flight in small groups. It was the friendly darkness of the night that rescued me, frightened and accompanied by a small band of men. At last I reached my home and saw my wife. Maturius also fled and abandoned the loathsome enemy. Some soldiers followed him too but those who wished to remained. As for the city of Justinian, it was laid open to a night raid. A friendly citizen who was unable to endure the yoke of the cruel tyrant unlocked its gates in dutiful betrayal. Nevertheless, the city's banners were held within the walls, and no one was able to assemble a fighting unit in the open plain to make trial of the enemy force. Nor was our own commander willing to trust our allies as long as the scoundrel Stutias was alive.

While an exhausted Africa lay in the clutches of these enormous perils, the sea grew bright with the sails of Ariobindeus. The natives were amazed by this

general's arrival, and the terrified Laguatan people fled from the land. If only, however, the sluggard Ariobindeus had never cast his eyes upon the Phoenician altars, for with his coming Africa was afflicted by greater distress and, caught as it was between two leaders, suffered further slaughter and cruel devastation. Power once bestowed has not the wit to endure an equal partner. No age has produced a congenial dyarchy. The very example of our ancestors teaches us this. Once the first step is taken the second follows on its heels. The limbs follow the head's direction and the branches bring forth a tree's proper fruit. The world, when it was still half-formed and producing meager crops at best, could not support two rulers, and neither did Rome, the mightiest of realms, which with the spilling of kindred blood consecrated its own new walls. Rivalry and confusion divided the wills of our own rivals, and each despised his equal and remained at cross purposes with him. The state was split into two factions then and each had its own leaders. One of the men might proudly consider himself first in the realm, but the other refused to be second. Africa lay barren in the wake of the barbarian plundering and wept. The Vandals, at the order of their commanders and of gallant John as was proper, attacked the savage enemy even though they were outnumbered. They were defeated, however, and fled, for their own vindictive partisanship overcame them. And yet, their commander John set his standards in motion once again and rode to face death against the dense ranks of the enemy. He relied on his own valor, and drawing his brave officers with him into combat, he was not afraid to clash with the mighty and monstrous force that faced him. The love he offered his country showed contempt for wounds that might mean harsh death. When he saw that his savage enemy's arrival was fast approaching, he was not reluctant to face death on his own. No, he set up his standards on the plain, put his trust in his allies and addressed his men: 'To have contempt for life for our country's sake, that is what gives us greater life. By the law of the Thunderer, death is the destiny of the human race and passes over none, for it



will come to us in one way or another. But the supreme glory of an honorable death is the greatest blessing and the sweetest thing a man can desire. The enemy is present, comrades. How often shall we flee the gratifying work of war? How often is the enemy to laugh at us as we flee, thinking us cowards? Now is the time to make trial of what threatens us, now we need valor; and your valor, men, has always been known to me and your loyalty as well. Arise, citizens of Rome, and in order to achieve the praise that belongs to loyalty, shatter these haughty nations. Now take away from your commanders the great shame they felt in the past. Suppose for a moment that we want to escape; what then? This enemy tramples on men who flee, killing them like women. No, change your attitude instead and keep shame far from our shades after death. I only wish that that beast Stutias were now before me, challenging me in arms, and that Fortune had rendered him up to me. Either our breasts would have lain open then, ready for one another's blows and an unrelenting fortune would have snatched the two of us away, or my cruel spear would have pierced that tyrant's body with deadly wound. And even if I were to fall, if this were the doom my own destiny promised, at least the state would be spared the disgrace of civil war.'

While he was giving this counsel to his men, see, the unholy Massylian line rushed upon them with its hostile banners flying. Shrewdly, guilefully, it took its stand, drawn up in a long line on the banks of the nearby river. The battle began with a volley of winged arrows, and the foul bodies of the foe were pierced by our winged steel. The enemy company gave way and turned its horses back across the river. Our general followed them and agilely cut across the river with a heavily armed unit. Fearing neither danger nor death, he took a course over which he would not return and attacked the enemy troops. He was like a violent and predatory lion that tears at the flocks and the fierce bulls. One victim he puts to flight, another he slays, and the frightened herd is scattered in all directions in its fear as its shepherd flees. The lion

rages over the broad fields with bloodied teeth, breaking and chewing his prey. This is the way our general John bravely threw the Massylian lines into confusion, strewing their bodies across the middle of the plain. The cohort behind him did as he did, pressing in on the fleeing enemy columns and cutting them down with their swords. Like a raging bolt of fire, our general flew across the entire plain with his comrades and as if in the thrill of victory gave chase to the fleeing Moors. Now his arms grew hot and thick with blood, and the warrior held in his right hand the ruddy sword of both soldier and general. But how sad, how horrible was his evil lot! Oh huge misfortune! Now the enemy had given way in defeat, and the Roman cavalry was laying his units low here and there on the battlefield, cutting them down in the hour of victory. But suddenly that ruthless villain Stutias set his rebel standards in motion and dashed out of the middle of a nearby valley. Hermogenes, a disgrace to the Roman realm, and Taurus rode with him. A Roman band, not our own, followed these rebels, and once again civil war doomed us to thrust weapons at one another with a sadly similar skill. Kindred breasts were attacked and bodies were slashed by kindred hands. Great-souled John was the first to recognize the standards of Stutias and, with bent bow, boldly took his stand against them. But his companions took flight, unable to endure the countenance of the mad traitor. John, however, placed an arrow in his bowstring and, drawing it back with all his might, let it fly. The shaft pierced the leg of that tough warlord, drove on to shatter the savage leader's bone and touched the tender marrow. Finally its feathers sank into the flesh and were stained with blood. Then gore gushed out and splattered his princely garments, and Stutias, transfixed and overcome by the deadly wound, turned his horse to the rear in flight. His comrades lifted him up as he fell dying and placed him beneath the thick leaves of a tree.

When he looked back, however, the winner of that contest saw his own comrades fleeing across the battlefield, and an overwhelming grief took fire in his



rugged body. Sorrowful and lamenting the catastrophe before his eyes, he shouted after them: 'Whom do you flee, comrades? Victory is yours, fellow citizens. Now Stutias, pierced by my arrow, has left the battle and lies prostrate on the ground. Turn your standards. Whither are you rushing? Whither does your lamentable fate lead you? Alas, Roman valor, you are perishing.' In this way he rebuked the units who had been frightened by the way fate had seemingly fallen out, but none returned. The might of the Moors pursued them, and countless thousands rode them down in their terror.

In the middle of the fields there was a steep-banked river bed which separated the borders of the neighboring lands. Into it the fleeing army plunged and, in its fear of dying, fell over its banks and gullies. A lamentable death arose for them then. Alas the poor creatures, both the momentum of their comrades and the fear of the enemy drove them on. The pressure of the assault drove many onto the weapons of their falling companions, and they even pierced their breasts with their own pikes. The brave horse, when pitched on top of his master in a clattering fall, crushed him beneath its immense weight. And so the wretched troops and the beaten officers perished together, and in that very moment John, our general, was taken from us and fell in a blessed death. He did not suffer the arrogance of an enemy master as many others did, nor did he, as a captive, fear the captor's sword. As for Marturius, he was able only with difficulty to attempt flight. He rushed to meet death in the face of his enemy with a small band, and Fortune blessed their boldness with safety and spared them a harsh death.

In the meantime, as his soul fled from his body, Stutias made his final lament. The savage warrior repented of his rebellious campaign. He drew his breath with a groan and, grieving, chastized himself. 'What grim pleasure was there for me in war? Why, unhappy in my own power, was I so ungrateful, never loyal to the lord of our realm? Now I repent all that, cruel death, as you drag me off, poor devil that I am.

I shall render, unholy death, the punishment I deserve. Catiline, roused by Furies, is here to accompany me in my own fury. Now I can see Tartarus cleft in twain and the balls of flame and ominous fires sweeping along. These wars bring me this just recompense for my treachery along with the sentence of a harsh death. Let the Latin rebels lament and take careful note of this punishment; hereafter may they keep their faith with the realm and its lord.' So he spoke and an unholy death stifled his unhappy soul.

When Stutias died, although a bitter grief for the death of their leader arose in his followers, the valor of the Romans began to wax again, and our army once more headed for the battlefield. But see, once again, Guntarith, that perverse villain, that rebellious bane and stupid scoundrel, that adulterer, thief, homicide, that bandit and foulest author of war, attacked our commander with his cruel arms before he was ready. He took him with guile, while his back was to the wall, by betraying his own oath. Reverence for our mighty Emperor did not touch him, nor did he fear to assume both command in battle and the title of tyrant. What slaughter, what cruel dangers the Tyrians suffered then! They lay beneath Guntarith's heavy blade, but for a short time only, for the days of that abominable and cursed rule were cut short. Our gracious father, Athanasius, rescued the Africans from this villain's slaughter with his matchless counsel. He alone proved able to restore Africa to its Roman destiny<sup>21</sup> and condemn the pernicious tyrant to death. In that hour the Armenian was his agent in carrying out that ambitious scheme. With the steadiness and sobriety that his years bestowed, Athanasius convinced him to slay the pitiless warrior. No, that aged father was not afraid to risk danger on behalf of liberty. Unhappy Guntharith, who had been so eager to maintain his savage rule, felt the sword of the Armenian as he downed a bitter draught and stained with his blood the table he should have shunned.

Now Africa is on the brink of destruction and has sunk down unavenged in the wake of the widespread devastation I have described. It awaits you, helpless.



Bring it help as it laments, for you are able to do so. Your valor is known throughout the world. Your mind is alert and your hand is ready with brilliant deeds."

These were the things the tribune recalled, as he told about the war, his eyes clouded by tears. He wept for bitter grief over the downfall of Libya and the fates of his fellow officers. The heart of our benevolent general was touched and he too groaned and the other captains groaned with him. Then they roused themselves in their indomitable spirits for battle, as grief and shame gnawed at their fierce hearts. They stained their cheeks with tears; they blanched and blushed and their fury did not remain hidden on their faces. Now they were eager to see the lingering sun rise, and they lamented the long night and the tardy light of dawn.

At last Phoebus burst forth, cleaving the blue sky with its shimmering glow, shaking its wandering rays through the clouds and sprinkling the light of its torch over the rippled waves. The welcome sun began to rise for the poor Africans too, as the unit commanders roused their ranks of men with various commands, urging on their brave warriors and their oft-decorated officers. Each encouraged his own men as he drove them forward, ordering them to break camp, prepare their weapons and watch for the commands of their general. The men decorated and carried out the standards and were glad to see favorable breezes playing in the unfurled banners. But John, our paternal leader, rising with yet another obligation on his mind, with heart devout, bent down and fell to his knees. Then he lifted his hands and eyes in supplication and, praying, said: "To You, Christ, great Father of men<sup>22</sup>, glory is rightly given with a pure heart and tongue. Willingly I give You praise and thanks; there is no other I want to celebrate. You, Creator of the world, subdue nations and put down their wars. You crush unholy armies and are wont to help our realm. Look upon the cities set afire by these heartless tribes, Almighty, and see the farms. Not a single farmer cultivates his fields now. Now, no priest is able to offer his tears in your temples on behalf of the people. Now, in the mountains all bear painful bonds

and their hands are bound behind their backs. Behold, Holy Father, and let Your thunderbolts not linger. Strew the bands of Moors beneath our feet, rescue the captive Africans from these savage tribes and look, Holy Father, upon Your dear Romans with Your accustomed pity. Graciously, we pray, turn our grief to joy."

As he spoke these words, he let tears drop on the dry sand, for grief and piety moved him, stirred his benevolent heart and shook his limbs with sob after sob. When he had brought his prayers to a fitting conclusion in words likely to find divine favor, he was silent. Happy now, he rose and, wiping the streams that flowed from his eyes, the hero turned his tranquil gaze back to his troops and ordered the armed cohorts to move out quickly. He himself climbed to a mound on which he stood tall and in prominence of place and from which he would be able to calm and steady all his lieutenants with his accustomed counsel. Around him gathered the commanders he had chosen and the rest of the brave officers. And the soldiers too came up in their crowded ranks and surrounded their general on all sides in a dense throng. They were like the bees who make a swarm by fastening their feet to one another when they follow their monarch. Their leader takes possession of the very top and crest of a tree or perhaps the middle branches of an ash with thick leaves. He himself settles there and, since he is revered for his buzzing, makes the selection of the site in the first place. Then the army gathers around him with close-beating wings and carries out their king's commands.

In the meantime, see, an armorbearer, coming from the mountain heights, was flying on toward the army. When he saw the closed-ranked units taking their stand and their leader brilliant on a lofty hill in their midst, he turned the reins of his swift horse with his right hand and, making for the general, winged his way over the grass. In his excitement he broke through the crowded ranks of men, dismounted and then, as is the custom, kissed the feet of his gracious lord. Now the entire crowd was afire with curiosity and pressed around him, anxious to know the state of things, to hear



him present the reply of the savage tyrant, for they feared that he might ask for peace. When this messenger, Amantius, was ordered to speak, he obeyed and calmly began in this way:<sup>23</sup> "Fulfilling all the instructions which my lord gave to his servant, I rode right through the middle of those tribes carrying your message. When I arrived, I saw the savage tyrant beneath a cliff on the mountain top. He called to his rebels then, stirring them with his voice. The Moorish throng came together on the run, and their dark faces filled his tent. In such a way, they say, Dis once held a council, when he was about to make war upon the gods, and a thousand monsters came over the broad roads of Hell. Hydra and grim Megaera ran thither, and old Charon, leaving his boat behind. Tisiphone raged in frenzy, shaking her pine torch that is mighty in both flame and weight and with her raged Alecto with her twisted snakes and all the forms that appear beneath vast Avernus. When a closely packed crowd had come and taken their places around their chief, he himself sat down and granted permission to sit with him to those in the crowd who bore that privilege. He, however, sat in the center as their leader and, looking at them all, he began haughtily with these wild words: 'My lieutenants, I want you to receive John's embassy and learn what his harsh response is and I want to show this man to all of you as he speaks his message. Listen closely to him here in open council and decide whether you have a fixed purpose and whether we are to seek peace or war.' Then they gave me permission to speak, calling for silence by placing their fingers on their mouths. I informed them of the policy and precepts of the lord who commands us. I spoke at length and explained how the great piety of our ruler contains all things. I told them about his indomitable courage and of how it is tempered with goodness. Adding frequent threats, I said that the Romans were forbearing but that they had, nevertheless, always broken proud nations utterly and crushed even mighty tyrants in war. I reviewed all those figures whom mighty Rome and later our own Emperor had subjected when they declared war even in the most distant corners of the world. I asserted our own willingness to

make war but also went over the chances for peace. Then at last I fell silent and asked them to respond. Interrupting one another's words, they emitted all kinds of howls in their rage, pronounced horrible words on their hissing tongues and gave themselves up to a strange kind of panic. They were like wolves deep in the mountains, when clouds crouch over the broad earth. They strike the sky with wail after wail and make the hollow glens echo with their cries. When their spirits were calmed, their proud chief responded to my message with these bitter words: 'The honor of the Roman empire, so recently breached, is very well known to me. Let no one imagine that he can deceive Antalas anymore. It is enough that the Armenian was able to do that once. Would you shrewdly pretend that you are my friends? Was I not yours? Did I not often act on your behalf and prudently carry out your commands? Did I not wage battles on behalf of your commanders, Roman? Surely this truly loyal state of ours tells the whole story, as does your blood, Guarizila, my brother, blood which was spilled at the command of a villainous Roman commander. The reward your Armenian paid me taught me a lesson, for he, relying on our power, was able to crush the tyrant Guntarith. I stood by that benign pacification of yours. I was worthy in supporting your triumphs time and time again and for all that are these the fitting rewards I get? Is this your famous loyalty? Is this the way you repay your friends? And even now, gracious fortune, you would have put Artabanes in my hands too, since by a strange chance our brave Ilaguas controlled both the army and the tribes from the lands of the savage Austur. But see, John, your general, now prepares to make trial of these same people with his puny army. It does not occur to him to ask us for peace in a humble manner. No, cunning in his strategy, he tries to cow with empty fears those whom he ought to be suing for peace. After all those triumphs he earned for putting down rebellions, triumphs which this hand gave him by bravely slaying many a chief, after fierce Solomon and the fate of that earlier John, will anyone dare to make trial of Antalas in war? Is the lamb, grazing in the valleys,



to terrify the wolf, is the lion now to fear the stag with its towering antlers? Should the barking hound tremble before the hare or the doe, the wild hawk before the gentle dove that wings its way beneath the clouds? Should Jupiter's own armor-bearer flee trembling into the clear sky from the noisy crane or the singing swan, and is all of nature to perish with its laws turned upside down? Behold, I choose to clash once again with the Romans, who have been so often defeated. So let them come back and try battle once again."

The legate had barely finished speaking when an uneven murmur made its way among the captains and the excited ranks of men. It was just as when, at the first rising of a storm, the sea is lashed by a mighty whirlwind and groans as it crashes on the craggy shore. The waves double their sound and the entire coastline roars with their fall, as they grow rough and rise to a tumbling crest in surge after surge. The general waved his hand and ordered silence, and the men grew quiet at once and gazed intently at their leader. Every countenance and every mind was fastened upon him, for they were anxious to hear their general's plan, and so they listened carefully and gave all of their attention to what he would say. And their leader exhorted his troops calmly as they hung upon his words and, rousing their excited minds to battle, set them afire as he spoke and made them staunch in the face of their enemy: "Comrades, this is the way the glory of the Roman empire has grown, the way our state, as long as it crushed rebel nations and their wars, has won the rule of the entire world. The Roman soldier has had no fear of nations that take up arms, nor did he ever turn his back in fear of an enemy force, however great its number. No, he was loyal to his fellows, watchful and cunning, strong to endure the toils of war valiantly. But whenever his loyalty snapped and the honor due to the Emperor failed to take complete possession of his mind as he prepared for war, as long as he chose plunder and spoil and, mad with war, coveted rewards that ran counter to our cause, then the Roman army, thrown into a self-inflicted panic, would turn its back and imagine that

the savage tribes had in fact beaten it. Fortune, did not, however, even in those cases, prolong<sup>24</sup> our suffering because of this disloyal behavior. Rather she returned with better grace and an abundance of joy. For, as her duty to the fates requires, she loves Rome as her own and for Rome she has utterly destroyed and crushed many an aggressor and bestowed her happiness on our realm. What did it profit Guntarith, the madman, to bear the title of tyrant, when he would pitch from his chair to the floor in the Armenian's bloodbath? Among the banquet tables and the cups on the festive board, did he not pay the penalty he deserved for breaking our treaty? Why should I mention Stutias, the exile, who wandered over all those parts of the world, coveting much and seeking what was vain, longing to win the name of tyrant in an unjust war? What slaughter he brought to Libya, what madness to these nations! With how much blood did he stain his sword! But he fell, perhaps too late, cut off by the death he deserved, taking upon himself again both guilt and punishment. You see then, men, how much Fortune labors to keep her promise to our Emperors, how much she works in successful wars to subject the entire world to the Romans. Come then, my comrades in war, my loyal citizens, show your strength, each of you, amid dangers visible to all and, like loyal Romans, crush these evil nations. Let their people and their subject kings learn what our nation's valor is, what her glory in arms. See the grave peril beneath which our standards now bow and be watchful, men. Our tents are surrounded and the Moors are all around us. Our only hope for safety lies with our valor and our swords. Those people you believe to be standing at our side, those you imagine are leagued with us as allies, are looking to the outcome of this crisis. If Romans are victorious, they will serve and give us honor. Only our good luck in victory and the fear they conceive will make them loyal. Now then, now, rise up, citizens. This is a victory that will break two enemies. Let those who face us perish by the sword and let our valor terrify the others. Unit commanders, each of you, go



and draw up your men in your positions. Let the standards go forth before their own regiments and bring your lines into battle well drawn up for the attack."

He finished his speech and, leaping up, settled himself high on the back of his horse. The armor of the revered warrior resounded and his helmet, flashing with a sudden splendor, reflected the sun and sent its rays into the men's eyes. The reddish gleam of his breastplate flashed through the camp, just like a cloud which, when it is moved with a strange rumbling along the margin of the vaulted sky, thunders as it touches the very heart of Olympus and suddenly sends flames crackling through its core. Then all the commanders and officers saluted him, and the cavalry squadron, following their lead, leaned upon their strong lances and bestrode their horses with a leap, while others held the towering necks of the tall steeds. Everywhere across the plain the swift mounts fought against the bit, leaping left and right in the grass. But when they felt their masters' hands upon their necks they rejoiced and strained to gallop across the broad plains.

They arranged their lines for battle then. Gentius commanded the column on the right wing and surrounded his standards with picked regiments. The general himself, rejoicing and resplendent in his burnished helmet, rode forward on his horse. Handsome in his plumed crest and shimmering in gold, he sped among the troops, kindling the flame of battle and bravely drawing his line up with a true general's skill.

Beside him Putzintulus, great in body and in soul, set the arms of his soldiers in motion and drew his close-ranked units into formation behind his standards. This warrior, towering himself in a crested helmet and resplendent in his corselet, was fair to behold as he grasped his long spear and rode high on his horse, shouting the customary commands to his comrades, for an overpowering wisdom dwelled always in his brave heart. Happy he would have been if fate had granted him long days in the sunlight. In later years how ripe in strength he would have been, indeed, how much more ripe he would have grown!

Gregorius came third, wildly brandishing the spear he had seized and resplendent with his own light shield and Spanish dagger. Beside him Geisirith set his troops and standards in motion, for he wanted to breach the enemy fortifications even before the signal was given. He knew himself well. Girt in shining armor, he bore towering weapons. With his whole body covered in steel, he was a glittering vision, for he had adorned the armor plates with a mesh of gold. And he wore a golden helmet dazzling with inlaid steel whose peak and crest he had decked with a horse's mane. He drew in a belt that gleamed with bejewelled knobs and a sword in an ivory sheath adorned his side. He wore greaves, which a Parthian hide bound with many golden fittings on his legs. These he had wrapped in bright purple, cleverly decorating them with gems as an artist might. All his designs were a delight to behold and his great valor was even better.

Next came Marturius, both brave and wise in counsel. He drew up his units on the wide plains and commanded the allies like a gallant officer. With him powerful Marcianus rode out against the close-ranked enemy, doomed to mix streams of Barcaean blood with his own. Nor was Senator, a man distinguished by his famous lineage, absent; he went along on horseback, a brilliant sight to behold and more fortunate than his companion in his polished arms.

Loyal Cusina followed them with a crowded and jostling band, leading out his force under Massylian standards. Graced with a calm manner and a Latin sobriety, he was a Roman in spirit and not far from being one in blood as well. Neither Adonis, beloved of Venus, nor brave Achilles could equal him in strength or the use of the javelin.

But on the other flank, on the gleaming left wing, the commander John, bearing the general's own name but older and advanced in years, galloped forward. A vigorous old age was his and the valor of a young man, and, using these, this great warrior was able by toiling with no small effort to crush his enemy. A piebald horse,



part black, but spotted with white patches, carried him. Proud in its own gold and jewels and gnashing at its bit, it ran swiftly here and there over all the fields, while the commander himself, the stern marshall of his troops, came and went and, flying onward, strengthened his comrades in their resolve as they went.

Nearby, tireless Fronimuth set his force in motion with standards erect, bringing them together with his allies on the open plain. Although he himself was pre-eminent in their midst, shining in his helmet and crest and glistening with the sudden splendor of steel, although, towering above them, he caught and broke the rays and the brilliance of the sun, he also had the protection of a close-ranked band that marched around him on all sides with flashing shields and helmets.

Next Marcentius stirred up his troops and urged them forward. As they received his orders, his ranks ran here and there over the wide plains. A golden helmet stiff with bronze and heavy with a crest, was set upon his sandy hair, and a loosely hanging corselet with gleaming plates encircled his tremendous shoulders. His horse pranced with a haughty step and the warrior himself carried weapons on his thigh, a quiver and resounding bow. Girt round by these, he brought his brazen arrows to the war and fortified his standards with a veritable wall of menacing officers. On this side stood Liberatus, a man renowned for his long spear, while on the other handsome Ulitan took his place, fitted out with various arms, a soldier who excelled with the javelin and was no less quick with the curved bow.

Ifisdaias came next, chief and father of his tribe, a leader who had learned well how to turn a horse with steadily held reins. A savage people followed him, and his companion was his son Bitipten. This tribe is a populous nation and one of spirited valor. Their powerful leader had kept the promise of his nature and was loved by the soldiers, their commanders and by our great general. His remarkable son, gallant in the arms he had taken up, was no less a warrior than his father and

could have out-matched with his javelin even the slender arrows that the Persians shoot from their bowstrings.

The commander Tarasis set his own lofty standards in motion and drew up his motley force with its wide range of armaments in front of the infantry. Commanding on horseback himself, he divided the battlefield among his companies in their assault formation and ordered them to link their shields. In this way his close-ranked battle line extended in a long front over the broad plain and bristled with shield linked to shield. The men's bodies were hidden by this thick cover as if by a wall. Only their battle axes and the tops of their helmets appeared, as their crests and peaks flashed from behind the shields. The brazen field also bristled with their spears held erect, and the air around them was bright with strange terrors.

This was the way our paternal general John, the mighty warrior, arranged the wings of his army for battle and set up his own standards in their midst. Setting the entire army in order and balancing the ranks of each company, he rode in the center as a general should, in order to wage the battle in command of his entire force and to act as bold tactician for his units as he set their arms in motion. When he is provoked, the sharp and watchful eyes of a bull rove back and forth between his horns and choose a place to wound his battling enemy. Pressing in on one side, he wheels to the right and then threatens on the left, multiplying the wounds he inflicts with this varied lashing of his horn. His eyes give commands too as his horns inflict their wounds. This is the way our general, balancing equal units of his army, ordered his companies into battle. In this same way the keys of an organ are skillfully arranged to be struck by the player's fingers. As he strikes them, the reed sounds beneath the air's touch, and neither the strings nor the basses moan unless the player chooses to play the tunes and make them sound by hitting the keys. In the same way, at the general's order, the entire battle line was set in motion and gathered into formation under its individual standards.



Ricinarius, resplendent in his own bright arms, stood at his side, deploying his units with equal care. He was carrying out the plans he had perfected in his mind but was always modest in his dignity. He was great-souled, gentle, wise, brave, blameless and powerful in arms, a victor over war and minister of peace. He was indeed humble in his heart, a thing which Christ loves, generous in devotion and worthy to execute the commands of a leader like his with despatch. For it is not nature, our universal parent, that links those like in body in a single life of the soul, but the signs of greatest grace and favor: chaste love, devotion, goodness, wisdom and valor. Filled with such grace and brilliant in his armor, Ricinarius rode on horseback between the lines in the center of the army, spoke calmly to his comrades and gave them his instructions.

The enemy army marvelled at the brave hero John as he set in order banners already fortunate in the very positions he assigned to them. But during the night hours Ierna, a major leader in this war, had grown anxious and threw up a barrier of camels along his camp, surrounding his bivouac area with eight rows of the animals. Then he tied his cattle together, skillfully binding horn to horn with six loops. Next the shrewd and cunning scoundrel prepared tangled snares everywhere in the trackless waste so that the Moors might sweep across the battlefield in safety and crush the unsuspecting lines of their enemy as they approached the camp by the very routes the traps afforded. Not even in the recesses of the labyrinth did Minos meticulously twist his double circles with such intricacies as these, turning their paths into a maze. It was the clever son of Aegeus who worked those out by tracing, as he had been instructed, his footsteps with an unravelled thread. Then he struck with his sword the breast that had been formed by the mingling of two natures, and the beast belched forth gore and fell to the dark earth with a clatter of broken horns. Next the Moor built a third fortification to surround the protective ring he had drawn together. He scattered the herd of smaller animals and then bound them together and kept them

hobbled. In this way he cleverly narrowed the spaces between by binding the asses close together and stretching their cruel halters tight. Finally he put traps and two-pronged forks in place around the camp, along with sharpened pikes and great rocks, for this, his final barricade.

Antalas chose his strategy with similar skill and came forward surrounded by the wings of his army. Confident in his mount, he plunged into the fray, after arranging the phalanxes for an infantry encounter, with the solid bosses of their shields linked. He held his ranks close to the camp's fortification, however, and was unwilling to commit his luckless footsoldiers to the hazards of battle further out in the field, for he had learned time and time again what terror lay in armed conflict and what Roman power was capable of. Nevertheless, the Moorish line marched out to combat in precise formation and under two banners. Dashing out in front, their horses galloped over all of the fields, and the swift Laguatan warriors made their way after them until they filled the fields and the nearby hills, the hollow valleys, the forests and the streams. Savage Ierna, their second in command, was with them, as was haughty Bruten. These two Camalus followed, raging against the oncoming enemy with many thousands of men. Then came Hidreasan and fierce Ialdas and Sinzira, who was hot for battle, and all those whose names no one wishing to report them could grasp, no matter how much he wanted to record the great number of those savage tribes. In their midst stood fierce Sidifan, the fomenter and master-mind of the war, who commanded the cavalry and its standards on their right wing. On the left wing, Carcasan linked his ranks with theirs and, moving the Ifuraces to war, let his tightly-formed lines pour out over the entire plain. Melangus ordered his standards beside them along with Gantal, Guentan, Alacanza and fearful Iutungun, swift Autiliten and brave Catubar and all the thousand commanders the Syrtas had sent to battle.



## Book V

Now foe drew near foe, banner near carefully positioned banner. They grasped their bows, took winged arrows from their quivers and brandished their iron-tipped spears. When the front ranks had covered the distance between the armies, the foreign troops denied our soldiers further advance. Standing firm, they forced their oncoming foe to stop in his tracks and, as a result, our ranks drew in their reins and came to a standstill. Looking out at the army, our foe, Antalas, son of Guenfan, saw the general John amid his standards and recognized him from afar. Then he rode out between his own men's weapons on his towering horse and passed before our great leader's eyes. The brave general, although challenged by a mere show of arms, went to meet his foe nonetheless. His opponent took flight at once, turning his obedient horse backward with his reins. Then our commander called after him: "Whither are you fleeing, Antalas? Is this what your threats come to? Look, John has come with his puny force to challenge you. Why do you turn away so quickly? Let Him now be judge Who moves heaven and earth, Who hurls the thunderbolt." As John called out taunts like these and summoned him to battle, the Moor felt shame and in his grief vanished among the throng of warriors. Then suddenly, by some magical craft a bull was sent out from the center of the Moorish line, a bull which Ierna, priest and mighty leader of the tribes' chieftains, had devised to represent the divine presence of Ammonian Gurzil and to be a first omen for his own men. It raged between the two armies with its tall horns, unsure of where it might penetrate the enemy line. While our ranks fell back in fear, it broke a pathway through the Syrtic lines and wildly made once again for its own camp. A Roman horseman pursued it and, hurling a quivering spear beneath its shoulder, laid it low in the middle of the sands. Then, with their harsh cry, the horns sounded the battle call and a sudden clamor of confused voices rose to the stars. Fury grew hot as howls increased. All of the surrounding woodland returned the sound, and each echo

resounded, sending back to the tribes in imitation the sounds of their various tongues. Here a Moorish band called upon Sinifere and shouted the name of savage Mastiman. Mastiman the echo replied. There they called Gurzil and Gurzil rebounded from the hollow rocks. On our side, the Roman army, throwing the sky into confusion with their voices, created its own thunder, and the mountains replied with the clatter of shaken quivers. Somewhere a venerable voice sang out and a cry arose: "May the brave do battle for your arms Justinian, inspired by the divine power of Christ. Preserve, Almighty Father, the rule of our Emperor." At the sound of this name the heavens quaked, and as the earth was struck, the groaning forests quaked along their ridges as well and appeared to be shaken at their tottering peaks. The mountains and lakes gave forth a dissonant groan. The earth, its frame loosened, trembled and the elements did homage to their Maker with their tongues.

To all of these things fury itself was added and the men's spirits grew really hot for the war. They urged their horses on and hurled weapon after weapon from their hands. Indeed the sunlight itself grew dim beneath the thick flights of spears, and black night rushed down beneath their javelins as the iron missiles of either side divided the bright sky above the weapons from the darkness of the battlefield. The clashing swords and shields were hampered by the arrows they sent flying first from one side then from the other. At last the entire sky, gloomy and dark, felt the burden of their mighty spears, and each time a weapon was thrown, a man on one side or the other fell wounded, for all the incoming missiles threatened death. But an uneven fortune rules battle. Often, when a weapon was thrown, it would strike an enemy javelin in its course and, linked with a weight like its own, would fall to the plain so that Mars had to forfeit the two wounds that a single accident denied. On other men death itself soon grew red, and the earth grew sodden as it was churned with blood. The air whistled with the spears that were thrown. War raged on and, catching the horses up in the slaughter of men, sent them wallowing along. An unholy power



gathered, rushing in from either side, and the men, blinded by the confusion and the frenzy, exposed their breasts to the enemy's weapons. And so sometimes soldiers preparing to attack others would feel the steel in their own bodies and let their sweet life flow from their wounds.

Fierce Ricinarius rushed forward, breaking through the enemy as they pressed on. He put the hostile lines and standards to flight by killing Eilimar, one of the first to join battle, a man who, confident in his horse and relying on his troops, boldly sought a contest with the Roman army. The great hero faced him and pierced his breast with a thrust of steel as he came on. Breaking his ribs, he cut open his body and ran a spear through his back with all his might.

Then the Mazax turned their horses in flight as cold terror took hold of them. A band of Romans followed them and by keeping the pressure on threw them into confusion. Galloping in hot pursuit over the plains, they dominated the rearguard of the Moors and, in an effortless slaughter, harassed their army as it fled. But when the broken cavalry saw their own infantry standing ready and facing them, valor returned to their hearts and they turned their horse around. They returned at a gallop, filling the field with their savage cries and tried to force their way through the center of their adversaries' line of swords. But our general blocked their way, summoning even greater strength and steadying his men by exhorting them with words of encouragement: "Roman lieutenants, our consolation and the solace of our realm, you who have so often experienced the burden of war's labors, you wanted a fight. Well now at last the chance for a fight has been granted. Our cause now totters on the peril this one moment presents. With all your might, drive the enemy over this remaining distance. This will be the single effort which will give us a clear victory. Remember, we are bringing great honor to our armies whose job it is to put down wars, crush proud nations and renew the joy they feel in the Roman realm."

So he spoke and, breaking through the center of the ranks in his excitement, gave the whip to his horse and rode through the enemy troops, roaring in a loud voice. His brave army followed with serried weapons. Everything was hidden by the dust, and a storm of iron rained down on the battlefield as flying shafts were shot from bowstrings.

First, our general sent Mantisyan to the world of the dead, slicing off his head with his sword. The warrior's thick neck never even felt the bitter wound. Nor did the sword linger in the bones after it was stained with his blood. The man's head lay in the grass, its eyes still open, and his swift horse galloped over the plain carrying his trunk, glistening with blood where his head had been lopped off. Next the commander stabbed Laumasan through the temple with his sturdy blade. The bone was shattered and the sword passed through the soft brain as well. Then, aiming at his helmet and mantle, John cleft his forehead in two and with it, his eyes and long locks. Throwing a javelin at close range, he laid low the swift horse of Guarsutia. Its ashen length was fixed trembling beneath the animal's left shoulder, but its warm blade ran through its body and, after piercing the rider's right foot, hung dangling there. The horse collapsed beneath the wound and its fall crushed its rider and left him lifeless beneath its deadly weight. An overpowering presence now, our general cut Manzerasen in two with his unbending blade and both sides of the warrior's body were toppled as he fell into two like parts. Then, striking the neck of Iartus, John dislodged the hand which held the man's weapon. It held on to the blade as it was drawn away, even as the man himself fell cold to the ground, and a trembling spasm lashed the earth, shaking the dying arm whose nerves were still warm.

Mazana, when he saw John in a man-slaying fever, rushed to meet him, drew his arm back and brandished his spear. As he came on, he hurled the missile at the general, then pulled up his horse and turned away. But our brave commander, undaunted by the risk, took the hurtling spear on his shield and deflected it.



Fearlessly he made for his enemy and, undaunted, struck him down. The gore leapt up and stained the green grass and the man's corpse lay stretched out<sup>25</sup> on the field.

Gardius had seen his huge brother brought down by the wound and, see, dashed forward, ready to defend his brother's body. Protected by his shield and proud in his weapons, he made for the general. His awareness of what valor demanded and grief for his brother drove him on. But even as he leapt up and down, with thighs bent, and taunted his opponent, his armor was pierced and he himself was hit in the ribs by a quivering shaft and fell down pinned to the sand. As he was undone by death, John, the noble hero, spoke to him: "Was it for this, unlucky man, that you came after me in your might and your ignorance? Or were you planning to go with your brother as his companion? Well then, your wishes are fulfilled, your fate linked to his in more ways than you realized, my sturdy warrior. As it turned out, you were pursuing both booty and death and now you leave Libya with your brother beside you."

He hesitated no longer but straightened himself in his saddle and made for Cullan with poised spear. He pursued him for some time, and the Moorish horseman, fleeing his mighty foe in terror, retreated in every direction. But the commander followed him in his rage, hurled his spears at him and finally pierced his back so that the man's blood gushed out onto the sand. And now bodies fell on top of one another as the enemy were swept backward over the wide battlefield. The terror of war drove the Laguatan aggressor back, as all of his ranks began to tremble. A fear of unusual power filled the breasts of the tribes, for they marvelled at our hero, were filled with horror and fled from him. This is the way the Giants trembled at the Thunderer when they were cast down by his bolt with broken necks. This is the way the Trojan army fled before brave Achilles.

When Bruten saw his people being driven from the fields and turning their backs in flight, when he saw that they themselves were causing the strange panic to

spread, that the army, its standards overturned, was giving way and that the fleeing Moors were entering the safety of their camp in terror, believing that death was at last bringing his life to a close, he called out, rallied his scattered units with his cry and led them, fearful as they were, back to war with these words: "What a pitiful horde you are, you who have never before retreated in defeat! What has caused this panic and how does it come by the power to drive your bands of shivering survivors before it? Can anyone defend himself by fleeing? Will you be safe in the camp which a proud and triumphant army threatens to take? Terrified by what combat, do you run away like this, my tough Laguatan men? And you, Austur, who are confident in your mounts, what foe has beaten you and why do you run in such fear? Alas, poor devils, do you feel no shame in surrendering the fields you are abandoning? Oh valor! Oh manly hearts! Do you really want the barren desert back? Are you rushing in this way in order to see the hot Syrtes? Oh, fugitive band, recall the past wars of your ancestors, their bloody battles and their noble strength. Your forefathers defeated this empire. Maximianus, although he held the brave sceptre of the Roman realm could not defeat our grandfathers. But now, see how small this force of common men is with which John routs and destroys our ranks. Come then, at long last, to the aid of your destiny!"

At his words the valor of the Moors was rekindled, and their lines wheeled around and returned. Fiercer than ever, they took up the battle again and threw the cloudy sky into confusion with thick flights of spears. They were like a ship battered by a hurricane. Driven again and again from its course, it is borne further out to sea in the direction the south wind forces it to take, and the dangers that threaten it throw the poor sailors into confusion. But if a wind meets them with the following gusts the crew prayed for, then the joyful helmsman gets up with a loud cry and, urging his companions on, turns his ship with skill, spreading the billowing sails to calmer



winds. In the same way that native commander restored his vanquished men with his voice and turned their savage spirits once again to war with his words.

Then Brutus hurled his spear at Paul as he advanced against him. Quivering in flight, the lance pierced the hero's warm breast, broke open the passages of his panting lungs and, driven home by its own powerful momentum, shattered the ribs on both sides of his chest. Ialdus struck Largus with his sword as the man joined the battle, Sinzera struck Crescens and Ilasan slew Servandus. Hidreasan, challenging the tribune Marcianus to a fight, hurled the spear he was brandishing with all his might and, horrible in his rage, struck the forehead of the brave horse galloping toward him. The horse, done in by the deadly wound, fell and broke the spear in its head beneath its immense weight. Ever brave, the tribune got up at once and, undaunted by the loss of his horse, took his stand as a footsoldier on the battlefield, helmet high and shield glistening. Wild Hidreasan, however, trembled at the very sight of him, stopped and retreated, for he lacked the daring to take on his enemy alone. The tribune followed him with sword unsheathed, but Hidreasan turned his well-trained horse, goading it with his spurs, and, fleeing in fear through his own ranks, disappeared among their dense weapons. Now when his pursuer could not reach the man who had actually thrown the spear at him, he cut down Merasgun with his sword as the man stood between them and after that cut down Suartifan too. The mountains rescued swift Gamadrums, but poor Isaguas met his death, and the victorious tribune, a whirlwind of rage, stripped the arms from his conquered foes. Fierce and fearless, he stopped those he saw trying to flee with their own comrades' spears, and so the bodies of men and horses were strewn on top of one another here and there, all those whom the javelins he threw reached, as they streamed into the middle of the enemy force in their fall.

But Antalas, surveying the entire scene from afar, saw him from his watching place on a lofty hill. He had refused to join battle with the first warriors earlier but

had formed a shrewd plan to enter the contest as if the reserve. Now, however, he was unable to endure the sight of the tribune, who was hot for slaughter. He was himself on fire to bring help to the weary Moors and so sought out those troops of his that had been left in small bands here and there on the hill. When he found them, he impetuously broke through the ranks of his comrades and made for Marcianus, who was pursuing the native squadrons across the meadow. The Roman was indeed like a lion, driven deep into the mountains by the shouts of hunters. Lashing his shaggy back with the goad and whip of his tail, he rouses his anger for the fight and, roaring, breaks men mighty in valor. Nor was the tribune frightened by the sight of his enemy Antalas when they met; rather he rushed forward and made for the man with drawn blade. But before he reached him, an unholy lance pierced the shield he was holding up as protection, and with its broad steel blade fixed itself in the warrior's ribs.

Now a great clatter arose, the mountains reverberated with loud cries and the battle grew savage again as the panic was checked. As Antalas came forward, his display of valor roused the natives' anger and gave new hope to the vanquished. Once again they struggled to put up a fight. They closed ranks, formed wedges, and renewed their assault. When he had solidified their power by regrouping their units, Antalas galloped fiercely through the middle of his swordsmen's ranks, brandishing a spear, and flew on against his close-ranked enemy.

The first to confront him as he raged was Ormus. He was not sprung from the stock of Romulus. Persia, his mother, had raised him for war, but Africa stole him from that mother when he fell beneath Antalas' hand. Towering above him, the enemy chieftain hurled a spear with all his might and pierced both the shield and his foe. At once luckless Arsacis, himself doomed to a fate unkind, came to meet him. This challenger the violent Antalas cut down with his tough blade, slashing the center of his body where he had girt himself with his bow. His lungs he cut in two while they still drew breath. Then, turning his victim's spear, he struck frightened Malcus



and, still in a rage, pierced the bodies of both Artemius and Maurus, a man with a grim name, bringing them both down after stabbing them with one of their own comrade's weapons.

Zudius, who was clad in a special set of armor, was much more daring than the rest. He had no use for the cavalry but striding into battle as an infantry officer, exulted as he cut down the enemy squadrons. He had just struck Misantas and Tiseras down, Tiseras who was one of the turncoats and Misantas who wore a feathered headress. Next he sent stubborn Sanzin to the world of the dead, stopped proud Amarus in his tracks and then used his sword to lay two brothers low: Garafin and Tilifan. Each saw the other dying as he died and grieved for the heart of their poor mother who would suffer grim sorrow for years to come. Then, from a distant hill, Sidifan saw the fiery Roman and went to meet him. Behind him he drew the Syrtic army as he made his way toward that gallant officer so hot with slaughter. And in the end the enemy's numbers and their valor crushed him, for the close-ranked foe swarmed around him and staggered him by hurling weapons from all sides. They stabbed the hero and struck him, and a thousand enemy warriors laid him low in the middle of the battlefield, done in by his wounds.

Our army had turned. Its standards had been scattered over the trackless wastes, and terror had driven our captains to retreat. But our general rushed forward with his loyal armor-bearers and brought relief to his beaten comrades with a show of valor. John, the mighty swordsman, broke through the enemy ranks first, wounded Madden in the chest with a javelin swift as lightning and laid him low on the earth along with brave Magargun and Taden and Meilan. Ariarith cut great Mestan down with his sword, throwing all his strength into the blow. Then he sent Magnus head over heels with his blade and slashed the head of Altisera from his neck, sending it rolling off in the grass. Zanbrus' face fell to his chest as his neck was pierced, and Roffas, his gullet sliced open, vomited red streams of blood, and as he strained his

sides painfully drawing his last gasps of breath, found that his gaping windpipe had lost its power to inhale.

Not far from there Ziper plunged into the center of the enemy ranks. He threw their troops into confusion and forced them to return to their camp. He slaughtered Ialdas, Tusdrus, Aracan and Nados, dispensing death in different ways, but laying them all low in the same valley. Then he joined swift Ilan to their number and, striking the haughty Conunian with his pike, brought him down as well in the middle of a sandy waste.

Fierce Ricinarius called to his standard-bearer Vitulus and ordered him to carry his standard into the very middle of the Moorish force. Then, flying on beside him, he made his way bravely through the close-ranked enemy all the way to their now panic-stricken camp. All the other soldiers followed. They opened up approaches and attempted to break through the fortifications. What pain fierce Ricinarius spread then as he advanced toward the mountain hiding place of his enemy, cutting down their ranks and preparing to break into their camp! Even Hercules, however fearful in his might, never harassed the walls of poor Troy in that way, driving the Trojans and their frightened king before him. He pursued the enemy soldiers and cut them down. He hurled his spear and struck the rugged chest of Lanzus, who was himself wild with killing. Then he took his blade and knocked to the ground the head of Masguen, a man filled with hatred, and struck Nacusan from afar with his sturdy spear. In the center of the battlefield, he laid low Macurasen's horse, slicing open a gaping wound, and the charger crushed its falling rider beneath it. Its veins burst open and its heart poured out its red life. Then, dying, the animal beat the same patch of earth with his hooves and made the clumps of meadow grass sway to and fro.

Brave Solomuth had also launched an attack against the close-ranked enemy. He slew Cullen and knocked Iutungun to the ground as he ran to meet him. He



cornered Meuzzen and cut his throat with his sword and then, galloping on, hurled Laltin from his horse. He struck brave Sisigun and Varinnus, whose fate did not haul him off quite yet, for the sword split his shield and reached only his left palm, cutting the topmost sinews with its slash. He was beaten, however, and so fled as his shield disappeared among the ranks. His left hand hung wounded, its fingers covered with blood, and the wet gore stained his footsteps as he ran. Geisirith hurled fierce Mificus down as the man sped wildly across the plain and stabbed Creucus through the breast when he confronted him. Then Dorotis hit plumed Antifan with an arrow. Without hesitating the brave hero bent his curved bow again, shot another arrow and struck bold Maggite. The man was pitched from his horse and fell, but the arrow was driven further and kept going until it made good its flight by slashing through the temples of cruel Cambrus. When unlucky Cambrus fell forward, caught by a wound intended for another, Barsippa attacked the fallen warrior, crouching behind his shield and brandishing his poised spear. But while he jumped up and down, taunting his mighty foe with his shield, swift Barsippa was himself struck in the stomach by a winged arrow and fell with a mighty crash to the earth. Then Bulmitzis went after Acus as he rushed headlong into the combat and hit him with a spear thrown at close range. Next he pressed in on black Mononasas and cut the hero down, all bloodied by his sword. Vascina died, his arm lopped off, Tamazu, a fierce and brave warrior, was brought down by Bulmitzis' blade and Martzara, a fiendish madman filled with hatred<sup>26</sup>, was run through by a rigid javelin. Germanus stopped Arzen in his tracks, as Salvis did Meniden, and John crushed Mestan on a rock. Tanala slew Iten, Vitalis killed Tizen with an arrow and Fiscula brought down mighty Frectes with the wound he dealt him.

Now the grim and brooding war god crouched over the ranks of foemen and forced them, driven as they were by fear, to retreat toward the safety of their camp. Our soldiers began to cut down the Moors among their own camels and, carried by

their own momentum, to break through the besieged trenches of the enemy. And this was where the greatest clash occurred with fierce fighting on every side. The brave Romans and the Moors, the rebellious and the peacemakers, rushed at one another all at once. Brother did not recognize brother then, covered as they all were with thick dust. Friend could not make out friend, nor citizen recognize fellow citizen. The frontal assault mixed unit with unit and made them indistinguishable in the grim combat, as rank after rank rushed forward with serried weapons. In the confusion of battle the very density of the men scarcely permitted the struggling units to move their hands. Chest was crushed upon chest, shield on shield, and they dashed the necks of the brave men near them with the tops of their helmets. Now, without warning, one of the enemy would be cruelly wounded, stabbed by weapons he could not even see. The dead bodies lay on top of one another in a thick heap. A thousand men fell dead, blood poured over the sand and its gathering stream, a ruddy current, was trampled by the men's feet as their footsteps were traced in the wet red mud.

But still Ierna, who was driving the poor Moors to battle, and Antalas, the madman, pressed on. They commanded their troops to leave the center of the camp and carry their weapons along the entire length of their walls. Young men and old were crowded together, for those of all ages were forced together at the besieged trenches as the increasing confusion whipped the flames of war. Courage made the Romans angry, their position did the same for the Moors. And the cunning Mazax were everywhere, complicating the battle with their own deceptive tactics. They ran forward and, observing the Romans making their way into the camp among the camels, launched a savage counterattack. They pressed their entangled enemy hard, now hurling spears at close range, now striking with unsheathed blades. Then they reformed their ranks and advanced beyond their own walls in an attempt to drive our brave companies off. It was not only their blades that inflicted horrible wounds as they flew onward, but now stones and firebrands fell, and sturdy staffs were propelled



through the air and scattered here and there. Then stakes and great stones broken from the mountains clattered upon our helmets and shields, and bodies surrendered their lives beneath the weight of the leaden missiles. Like thunderbolts, torches glowing with red flames were often seen, launched from the other side and hurtling overhead. Our soldiers held their positions with all their might and, with faith in the valor of their unconquered leader, they pressed in on the enemy camp. And yet the enemy, in a fit of vicious anger, struggled on and hurled another attack at our men, even managing to drive them back and regain their trenches. But our general John, urging and steadying his comrades, renewed their spirit with his thundering voice. That same sound terrified and confused the enemy, for they trembled when they saw the hero or heard his voice. That's the way it is when Jupiter stirs his frightening flames. Then, with the sky in confusion, he terrifies all the nations of the world with his thunder, and their hearts tremble at the bursting of the clouds. Thus, at the sound of mighty John's voice, the cold terror in their shaken breasts threw the Marmaridan lines into confusion. Their troops gave way in fear and turned their backs in flight. The Roman soldiers followed, driving them on before them. They laid their bodies low one on top of the other in their own defensive positions, and the general rejoiced and exhorted them to break through the trenches, setting their hearts on fire with words of joy: "You have beaten them, comrades. Now break down these barriers - an easy task - with your swords and cut down these people with your bloody blades, while the moment of vengeance is here, while deadly terror drives the enemy and the greatest valor animates your spirits. The time has now come. Up, my boys, and exact the price of war. And you can hope for spoil once this enemy is annihilated, for by imperial command (And in doing this may I look upon the cherished eyes of my son, Peter, unharmed and deserve to behold the towers of Carthage as a victor.), we will gladly grant the entire camp to our men as the price for their toils. Neither I nor any other commander will be permitted to take spoil from his comrades. Let

each soldier seize and hold what delights him and take joy in his own acts of daring with even greater boldness. Come, comrades, be savage in slaying their men, their animals, whatever they place in our path and straighten the twisting path before us by carving out a broad avenue of approach. I shall go first so that each soldier may do in confidence and after my example what he sees me doing in combat." So he spoke and, making for the camp, was the first to strike one of the huge camels with his sword. He struck it at the feet where all the strength of the beast lies concealed implanted in its tendons. Then through each leg bone the bitter wound sliced and cut both haunches undoing their strength. The camel pitched backward and fell with a horrible cry to the ground, crushing two Moors beneath its weight. It pounded their mangled bones and shattered the marrow to pieces, for in ghastly terror of our general the two of them had concealed themselves beneath the high belly of the animal. And a Gaetolian woman with her two children fell backwards from the camel's back and lay there as the loose baggage crashed down on top of them in their fall. The saddle and the woman's stone for grinding grain slid down and their weight snapped the remaining ropes and thus breached the barrier that was delaying our men. All at once the camp was thrown into confusion, as the animal barriers, cut by a single stroke, lay open. It was like the fall of a tall building that is hurled down with a crash when its supporting columns are removed, and its mighty fabric, torn stone from stone, lies scattered over a wide expanse.

At the other end of the battlefield, Gentius cut the enemy units down and, mad with rage, threw the broken barricades into confusion with men in close formation. With him fiery Putzintulus scattered horrid corpses on the ground with his lightning blade. They ran on like two lions who throw the flocks into confusion whenever dreadful hunger moves them. That was the way each of them rode savagely against the foe, breaking through his own sector of the enemy's defense with a slash of his sword. Tireless Fronimuth rushed in too, cleaving the enemy ranks and



setting his entire force in motion. And Marcentius was all afire and bristling with arms as he cut down the ranks of men in the middle of the trenches, just as John, hot for combat, raged on with a ruddy sword. Cusina, close to the Romans in both birth and allegiance, butchered enemy bands in another sector and spilled quantities of gore over his armor as he hurled spear after spear and laid the bodies of the Moors low over the broad plain. He lopped off their arms with his sturdy sword and cut the necks of many men and the sinews of many horses. His officers breached the trenches on every side. Tall Tarasis offered wild resistance, surrounded by enemy troops, but the captain Cusina struck<sup>27</sup> their breasts, and their ruptured entrails swelled from their broken ribs, oozing out and growing numb in their own warm blood. Brave Ifisdaias, fired by his own mighty power, made his way across the field, slaughtering his foe as he went, laying low the Syrtic dead with a glowing steel. The great valor of their commanders and the fury they engendered inflamed their comrades, and so the men threw all that remained into confusion with their swords. They broke through the lines, slaughtering, plundering and lashing out. They cut a path open for themselves, strewing dead bodies here and there, and then, riding like savages, they struck without discrimination. Neither age nor harmless sex softened their hearts. No, the Roman soldier laid low the bodies of all, and the clash of arms rose up as the mountains echoed with the sound of broken armor. As their limbs were torn away the hearts of the dying groaned, and the tangled dead grew thick on the broad field. This is the way it is when innumerable farmers, bringing down an oak in an ancient forest, cut up the barren branches, pressing on in a contest of work. Through the entire grove a multitude of axes double their heavy blows as the forest sends back an echoing groan. This is the way that John broke into the Moorish camp with his comrades. On all sides the swords sang and grew red with gore as the enemy gave up their lives, wounded and groaning. Young and old together stumbled and fell over the entire field, and mothers, oppressed by their burdens, fell with small

children among the tall herds. Yes, the Romans slew countless enemy with their glowing swords, and the careening fall of the dying soldiers brought down countless women too. The Moorish women themselves, as they were dragged off by their hair, feared that they would be dealt a savage and impulsive blow, as the triumphant foe pulled them away. One man, making a run for it, brought back children taken from the enemy, put them in the hands of attendants and then returned to the trenches, trampling on the dead as he went. Another amused himself by breaking the reins of the camels, another by stealing cattle, still another by returning with the sheep he had rustled. One man even drove off the sluggish mules with the blunt end of his spear. Everything perished now and the cattle of the Moors were nowhere to be found.

The enemy cavalry, alone and exposed, rode across the open plains. Savage Ierna, his strength broken, fled and carried with him the horrid images of his god Gurzil, hoping that with his aid he would be able to protect himself. That unlucky hero weighed his horse down with a double weight, thus holding it back, and so the poor man brought on his own death. Whomever you worship, you fool, what protection does he offer to your people, what solace of any worth does he offer to you as you fall in death, as he is crushed by your enemy and they melt down the glowing metal of his image with fire that steals its form? And so the Syrtic force which the encircling army was pursuing with its bristling arms, cutting them down in the wasteland, now with one death, now with another, were fleeing across the broad plains. Nor were any of the fugitives able to endure their Roman pursuers in grim battle or even to turn their heads and eyes. Driven by cold terror, they threw away their swords and fell headlong to the ground. And our soldiers, consumed by bitter hatred, drove them trembling to an easy slaughter. Our men brought back the ancient standards of Solomon and, along with them, the booty captured by Ierna. Horrid corpses lay strewn over all of the fields, even crashed down through the valleys and the rocks so that now the rivers were filled with heaps of bodies and the horses trod



upon the dead, their swift hooves reddened by the shattered limbs. The wretched wounded groaned as their blood flowed over the grass. The gore, splattered over their weapons, fixed the clotted blades in the men's hands, for every blade was red. Among the many thousands the chief Ierna did indeed fall. That savage and once haughty king of the Marmaridans lay in the middle of the battlefield wounded and naked as he deserved.

That day would have been the last for all of the tribes, had a propitious delay held the headlong course of the sun back as it had once before. But as it set, the flamebearer, in accordance with the unchanging course of its circuit, sank into the western waves and with the shadows it brought took away the ability to see the fleeing tribes and the field of combat, and so led our brave companies back into their camp.

#### Book VI

That night not all of the victorious Romans sought peaceful rest at the same time; instead the sentries they chose guarded the camp in turns and did not close their eyes in sleep. Joyous thoughts ran through their sleepless minds, however, and no sluggishness afflicted the limbs of those unbeaten troops after the battle. Victory restored their stiff muscles, and what was more, the expectation of the spoils of battle restored their valor and the promises of their trusted leader lightened their spirits.

In the meantime, under the protection of night's darkness, the Moorish force ran away, dispersed in their fear throughout the trackless wastes of the entire region. It was night that aided them and night that harassed them. By hiding everything in darkness it rescued all their men from the very jaws of Hell, and yet it troubled the very same bands, confused as they were by the uncertainty the war had brought. They fled in fear in spite of the fact that no one was following. And as they trembled, they imagined that the noise they themselves were making and the sound of their own

comrades were in fact the enemy; and so, in confusion they kept lashing the tall flanks of their horses. The mountains echoed throughout the silent night with the repeated cracking of their whips, and the swift steed's hoof terrified all their allied ranks as it struck the solid plain.

The dawning of another day was driving the sun from the ocean to run its course, and the sea was stirred and seethed beneath it panting horses. The pools of the deep grew hot, and the swelling waves boiled and gave birth to the sacred fire. Ever pious, our general rose first and joyfully gave thanks, adoring the Lord of power and returning praise that fit the great favor he had received. Then the chosen captains, the brave officers and the foremost of their lieutenants arrived. The commander stood in their midst and was the first to speak: "What a hardened nation has fallen before your feet, comrades! Nowhere else<sup>28</sup>, not even in savage Persia, have I seen a people so willing to die, to offer their throats for slaughter and to confront their enemy face to face. For as often as I forced these foes to turn their backs in defeat, just so often did they come back with fearless visage, with their threatening shouts and wild leaping. Nevertheless, they retreated, broken by our unsurpassed discipline and the power of our God. Now, I have decided to move quickly, to protect the Libyan lands with the customary garrison and thus to restore our happy rule. Lead your troops back to their proper stations with haste and fortify your positions. Circle the lofty mountains with your net, the caves, the groves, the streams and cliffs in the forests and their hidden recesses. Then, ever so carefully, close the jaws of your trap. Before long the wicked race of Mazax will perish, dying of starvation. And if, with their force routed, they lack the strength to plunder the nearby homesteads, either they will at once subject themselves to our arms and seek peace or as fugitives make for the most distant reaches of the earth and desert our territory. Let it be the greatest concern of the two captains at Byzacium to throw the troubled Massylian force into confusion with a pursuing force of their own, to press



upon their ill-fated phalanx with their swords and drive the enemy far from our borders."

So he spoke and they all agreed to carry out his commands. The powerful and victorious army was divided into parts, each of which made for its own fortress. They marched to the cities and forts and open regions of the land so that poor Africa was released from its long grief and, in its joy, celebrated the victory of the serene hero, John. The happy Carthage of Justinian showed its approval of the general with continual applause as it received him with open arms. The gates that had been closed for so long were opened, and the triumphant victor marched to the center of the city as the people rejoiced. The Sidonian elders brought him palm and fresh laurel. A throng gathered at a run from all directions in expectation of the Latin army's arrival. Weary old men and timid girls came together in their desire to see, and matrons stood along the walls and watched, wailing with joy in different voices, for the great length of the cruel war had touched their spirits. They grieved with a woman's devotion, recalling former misfortunes and retelling the evil deeds of the savage tyrant: how in a moment of uncertainty he had broken his treaty and opened their gates one after another to the tribes; what he was thinking when he treacherously betrayed their poor city and with what slaughter he cast it into confusion. With unending praise, boys, young men and elders chanted the Emperor's name in tribute to our general and rejoiced in their hearts. People of all ages were amazed by the sight of the battle standards, by the clothing stiff with dust and the men whom the savage slaughter had given a terrifying aspect. They gazed at the breastplates and helmets, the shields and menacing swords, the belts, reins and plumes, the bows and clattering quivers and the spears whose points were red with Massylian blood. They took delight in watching the captive Moorish women go by, noting how, in fear, they rode on tall camels with branded heads, how some held their small children beneath their breasts, how with faces tinged with sorrow, these poor mothers struggled with both arms to hold on to

the baggage on their heads and the little cradles they carried. Their unholy hearts groaned, for now they were quite willing to serve the wretched mothers of Africa. Grief had taught their craven hearts a lesson and they were ashamed of their former wickedness. They realized now that wars had to be guarded against above all else and cursed their lot and their gods. Nor were all the captives of the same color. There sat a woman, horrid to behold, the same color as her black children. They were like the young of crows, whom you can see turning black as their mother sits above them, holding out to their open mouths the food they eat each day and lovingly embracing them with her outstretched wings. And while mothers and fathers took pleasure in showing these horrible faces to their little children, the great-souled leader passed beneath<sup>29</sup> the threshold of the temple with his standards. He prayed to the Lord of heaven and earth and sea and made an offering which the bishop, in accordance with their ritual, placed on the altar in thanksgiving for the general's return and for the defeat of the enemy. These offerings the priest then consecrated to Christ.

In the meantime the Syrtic leader, Carcasan, gathered the force, which a mighty terror had scattered, from the borderlands all about and, with tears welling up in his eyes, spoke to them in their sadness. "Unconquered tribes, I never hoped to see the Moors brought so low. The Ilaguas, who have never before been defeated are destitute and have returned beaten. We have lost mothers, wives and young all together. So then what remains at last for men but death alone? What can give us pleasure now? To be undisturbed? Or is it your pleasure to challenge in war and arms the arms of these same tough soldiers? Yes, it was a base and wretched fault to have been broken once and to have yielded. But not all of the aid which our gods brought us disappeared on those fields. Such is not the will of Ammon, nor the will of Gurzil, who even now laments his violated divinity. Fortune, which wanted to preserve our men, does not threaten us in that way. We lost only our herds; we still



have our strength. Consider how many men have fallen. It is as if a jar were to take in a few waves from the watery sea. Would Thetis be diminished or feel a loss then? However many are the stars that fall with their fires struck out, still heaven, which is filled with constellations, always has a full complement of them. This is the way this affliction touches our nation, for, being as brave as it is, it scarcely feels at all what has happened. Now take counsel and bring help to your realm at once."

When Bruten heard these mournful words, his savage mind clutched at war. "Mighty father," he said, "If you renew this war and trust in our efforts, you can indeed recover our wives and children. I say we should give up our lives and find our own end in war. What will be our reputation among all other peoples of the earth if the insult of our nation's slaughter remains unvindicated and is told to the entire world? Better that death should seize our tribes, suddenly swallowing them up in the gaping earth. Let the jaws of Tartarus and the houses dark with the pallor of death spread out before us. Let Proserpina maintain a kingdom that knows no father thanks to the wars of a black husband. You have your troops and you have your arms. Up, to war! With you as our general I shall confidently give up my life, free of any guilt. Here is the salvation that will not fail. You are the glory of our tribe, you are our valor's honor, you are the sure hope of the Moors."

Scarcely had Bruten spoken when they all responded with a shout. They roared the name Carcasan and proclaimed with their hearts and tongues that Carcasan alone was the leader of their tribes.

When he saw that the fury implanted in his men had increased and that their mad desire for the insane war was waxing, he made for the lands of the Marmaridans where horned Ammon dwells and asked for replies from cruel Jupiter. But that Jupiter whom you question, fool, is a liar and always takes delight in tricking wretched minds like yours. A fearful god, he takes joy in blood and seeks to destroy all nations. But at the shrine, when a wild bull was struck full in the forehead with

an axe and fell, the grim and gloomy priestess took in her hands her noisy tambourine and, shrieking madly, wheeled leaping around the altar. Her long neck was whipped back and forth, her eyes flashed with fire, her hair stood up on her head and her face grew red and hot, a sign of the god's presence. Now her cheeks became spotted with a pallor, now she rolled her eyes, now her entire head, as, with a piercing shriek, she gathered the cruel fires. But when she felt that the divinity possessed her entire breast, then she gazed at the moon glowing high in the night sky with its bloody light and, examining the fates, reckoned them up. She was afire now, she panted, she gasped, she grew pale, blushed, seethed, shivered while she searched their prophetic path. At last her unholy voice and savage lips pronounced the secrets of the fates for all to hear: "In a bitterly fought war the victorious Ilaguas will drive the Latins off in confusion, and the Mazax will hold the fields of Byzacium with their own great valor for eternity. Then a nourishing peace will follow and the commander, Carcasan, pre-eminent and serene, will enter the lofty citadel of Carthage through opened gates and will ride with a throng around him, through the center of the city. The Africans will marvel at their terrible faces and, at his arrival, they will run forward bringing palm and laurel. Carthage will be called blessed among all the nations of the world, and the fear of Carcasan will make insolent tribes subject, as they grow to love the treaties that bring them peace.

While the priestess prophesied these things, the spirit confused and obstructed her speech, deceiving the listeners' wretched minds with error. And so, with deceits like these, false Ammon tricked the Massylian people. For while he does chant the truth, he wraps it in a mist and makes his verbal tricks ready. The Moors did indeed hold the fields of Byzacium perpetually and will continue to hold them with their bones, which now lie broken by the power of John, our great general. The commander, Carcasan, did in fact pass on high through the middle of the lofty



Carthaginian citadel with a throng around him and then, when his neck was cut, Africa watched as his head was fixed to a rigid pole.

Mindless and trusting too much in these evil replies, Carcasan prepared horrid war. A rumor ran here and there among all the people that Ammon had prophesied a kingdom for the tribes. Swift squadrons rushed away from the hot Syrtis and, making a false claim to empire, invited other savage tribes to join them. A barbarian throng gathered and grew larger in men and arms. Cavalry and infantry rushed to join them as well as those who, in the manner of the Moors, sit on tall camels. Not only the Ilaguas and those tribes which had formerly participated in the war flocked to them but others came as well: rough Nasamonians who plough the Syrtic fields and those who cultivate their own farms as neighbors of the Garamantean<sup>30</sup> land and drink from pools along the banks of the fertile Nile. Who could name or number the tribes? You might as soon count the waves of the sea, the drops of water in the clouds, the number of sands washed on the shore, the fish which the whole ocean or the birds which the whole earth holds, for they were as many as the stalks which a motley field brings forth at the coming of spring, as many as the stars which embellish the entire sky.

Carcasan, the driving force behind the war, considering himself safe and brave, given the power and weapons<sup>31</sup> now at his command, repaired his idols and standards and, madder than ever, moved his force away from the outlying regions. He proceeded against his foe like Antaeus, who had been beaten again and again by the arms of Hercules. That ancient giant fell deliberately and restored his weary body by touching the sand, until the Tirynthian victor saw through this device and, grasping his opponent with all his might, held his body flat with his great weight and squeezed his savage neck in such a way that he could not touch his mother earth, and so overpowering death shut the poor creature's eyes. In the same way, although conquered, Carcasan renewed all his power from his own Syrtic people and, unaware

that he was about to die, took up arms against his enemy again. In that moment terror of war and the countless and cruel dangers of the dark night left the hearts of his people.

But behold, a swift messenger sped across the land, despatched by great Rufinus, and now the peaceful cities of Libya were terrified by a report telling that the conquered native bands had once again gone to war, that the troops of their cavalry were riding out of the lands of the west, ravaging the houses of Tripoli, and that, under the command of Carcasan, the savage tribes were advancing against the walls of lofty Carthage, promising themselves imperial status. The soldier who had been sent to bring the message to our general had just reached the court of Carthage. Bitter anger dashed John's heart as the man made his report, but the finer wisdom that marked his righteous mind held his indomitable valor in check and sought a course of action instead. He turned all of these concerns over in his heart and kept his attention focused upon them. His keen mind ran over the situation, surveying everything, weighing the matter with sharp good judgement and taking note of the dreadful danger on all sides. Then, calling on his lieutenants as was his custom, he asked their counsel and revealed to them his own thoughts and intentions: "Comrades, the Ilaguas, whom we have conquered and must conquer again, have once more declared war and dare to clash with the standards they met before. They are now overwhelming the fields of Tripoli, stealing a renegade's plunder and threatening to move against our land. I am preparing to set our standards in motion, preparing to go and meet their numerous tribes, for I want to join battle on foreign soil and cut down this enemy far away from our fields, lest Africa, shaken again by cruel destruction, should sink into deeper ruin. The possible cost to us, the places we will have to fight in and their impassable roads trouble me. But you can see how poor the year's harvest has been, and the province itself has lost much of its resources in the recent war and lies, alas, too weak to support us. Our huge army will not be



able to endure a shortage of food. If we allow the enemy to reach even the most distant regions of Byzacium, they will opt to hasten on and destroy everything in their search for plunder. Then war will throw this weary land into confusion again. Think about these things and make my uncertain mind resolute with your instructions."

The general had no sooner finished then they all decided to make the distant journey, claiming that they could indeed endure the relentless heat of Libya. The entire throng promised him fierce hands and minds and proclaimed their desire to attempt great works on behalf of their country, for the men despised the rebellious tribes and so whipped their spirits to a violent frenzy in the face of battle.<sup>32</sup>

When the general saw that his companies had been stirred by savage valor, that they were promising to be fearless in war, he shouted the command to set their standards in motion. Then with brazen moan, the bugle set forth a grating song, and its cruel sound stirred the armed units. All the squadrons of cavalry and the infantry, along with the Latin captains and their aides came from their own stations and gathered at its command. And Cusina, always first in loyalty to the Roman army, came as lieutenant general, leading the Massylian troops to war. Our brave general proceeded southward where, beneath the tropic of Cancer, the glowing sky is scorched by the sun and holds the dry land too tightly in its grip, so that the fields struggle all the time and burn with thirst beneath gusts of the west wind. There the African wind parches the entire land with its flame-breathing storms and there the African himself wanders in thirst over the hot sands and, panting, helplessly searches for even Stygian waters.

Rumor, like a herald, spread the news in many tongues, speeding on before to announce that brave John was moving quickly accompanied by all of his captains. This unwelcome message made its way to the ears of the Laguatan people, for the enemy's wicked horsemen were laying waste the land of Byzacium like common thieves. Striking their hearts with the great power of John's name, the rumor terrified

them and so they turned their countless troops back. Driven by terror now, they realized that they would have to face the general once again and trembled at the thought of what they had experienced at his hand before. They remembered the grim visage and all the battle standards of the man. And so they did not hesitate to flee beyond scorched Gadaias and the baneful places in which there is no way to travel or even to live. Not a single bird hovers or wings its way through the hot air of those regions, and even Jupiter's armor-bearer, who carries his flaming bolts, can scarcely endure without injury the hot dry blasts on the edge of that glowing sky. And yet terror compelled the enemy to approach them.

When our general perceived that the enemy bands had retreated through the desert in fear, ever brave, he pursued them in their flight, boldly entering the hot sands of that thirsting land. He ordered all his men to bring water and bread for themselves, and they quickly carried out their general's commands. But in those places to what extent would he be able to satisfy the hunger of so many men and for how many days could he nourish so large a force? Before long the water bags were empty and there was no food anywhere. Their parched throats burned and they grew weak with hunger. Alas, the soldiers gasped for breath, reeled about wildly and, reddened by the heat of the sun, grew feverish as their bodies were scorched beneath its mighty fire. Finding a river nowhere among the sands, they carried on a vain search for water, just like those famous troops of the Argives who, when once they made their way to the fields of Thebes long ago, were afraid that the pools and springs had been dried up by Bacchus' power; and so their commander, Adrastus, in his thirst, sought far and wide for rivers in that land.

The Roman soldiers cried out, submitting their sad complaints in bitter lamentation: "If a grim fate threatens to destroy the Roman nation in a single instant, there are swords, there are wars to fight, there is the savage anger of these tribes. Let a lance transfix us; let all the weapons they have come at once like thunderbolts. Let



the spears they throw pierce our bodies. Let them drain us of our lives as long as it is done with a wound. But why do dread hunger and fever and thirst ensnare us alas, in this slow fate and wear us down with a long-drawn-out death? Let our band be dedicated victims of the sword. Turn our standards back. This throng, weak with hunger, begs this of you as well: be loyal to your men and have pity on us and on yourself. Consider your men, great general. Our limbs grow emaciated now, our bones, exposed and withered, grow stiff with dry marrow, our sinews are taut, our skin dry, our eyes sunken, our cheeks tinged with pallor. The very image of death now holds our bodies and our thirsting breath is on fire."

The helpless mob had scarcely finished when their paternal leader himself silenced them as they grieved and, in his goodness, restored them, weary as they were, with his speech. With these words he counselled them: "Oh hope of Rome, glory and salvation of your country, do not run away from this struggle, however difficult it is. Master your thirst and dread hunger. Recall now the difficult deeds your fathers performed. The nations of the world knew the strength of our ancestors. In this way, by enduring hardships, our forefathers conquered the world with their own valor. Patience is the greatest virtue, and these tribes fear this in us. What is more, it will terrify still other enemies even as it cuts down these. The enemy force struggles beneath a twin doom. On the one side, parching thirst and fever and hunger attack them; on the other, their great fear of Romans compels and menaces them. Up now, be blood-thirsty and make trial of these regions denied to man. This red-hot zone will bear witness to your labor, and the vault of heaven will confirm its testimony. Our descendents will read of how I followed great Cato, making trial of this region, and of how you prevailed over it<sup>33</sup>. Let the love of your country overpower your minds and then this evil thirst will yield, driven off by that holy power, and your zeal will find its fulfillment."

It was in that way that our distinguished general soothed the Latin cohorts with his untroubled speech, watering all of their hearts with his words, as if with a sweet stream, and filling their stomachs as if with banquets.

But a bad piece of luck befell the Latin cause nonetheless, shattering its strength and breaking its mighty power. It happened that the horses would wander over all of the fields in search of fodder, for dread hunger and fever held every kind of creature in its clutches. There was no fresh grass, no trees with leaves of any kind, when suddenly a field grew golden with thick grass and the plain beyond blushed with flowers. Then the greedy herd, driven by its dread hunger, ran in all directions as it caught sight of the grass it had desired for so long and tried to crop the entire field from one end to the other. The horses even licked at the barren sand, unable to satisfy their hunger by feeding on that unhappy pasture. Finally they fell one on top of the other on those fields, dying a strange death and biting at grass with their cold teeth. The Roman soldiers were dejected by the death of their horses, and a savage wrath overpowered them as they went along sad and anxious, their hearts confused by great anxiety. Absolutely terrified by this single misfortune, the great valor of the men was dashed again and a malignant fortune set the army at odds, fomenting, as yet another burden to oppress it, its first uprising.

When the general saw that this great catastrophe had occurred and that his troops' strength was being diminished, he proceeded to move his camp to the shore, in hope of relieving and restoring his men in their agony. And so the soldiers began to feel a gentle breeze and to find fresh grass as they approached the shore. They found no rivers, however, and so they pressed the very flowers to their parched mouths and moistened their burning lips with their strange juices. They satisfied their hunger with the strange food plants provided, in spite of the fact that they could not bear their tastes. Many returned to the army taking advantage of nightfall, and some scattered over the fields in search of food. Others wandered about looking for



water, and their cruel hunger forced still others to turn their backs in flight and to desert entirely the standards of the leader they had come to despise.

Finally, the general pitched his camp near the waters of a river which had at last been pointed out by guides. The thirsty Roman soldiers crouched at its banks and took relief from the flowing water. From all sides the soldiers gathered there at the water and drank from its sweet stream. Without bread, they chewed on the flowers and fresh grass, hoping to satisfy their hunger with these things. In view of this, the general ordered a message to be sent throughout the coastal cities requesting that ships be launched to bear food to his troops. Bad luck again, however, for an adverse south wind blew against them, and cruel Fortune did not allow the ships to cross the watery waves under sail. Finally, a nearby Urcelian band, who were not to be trusted at that point, rode up to the Latins and made themselves an added factor in the Romans' fate.

The Astrices to whom this tribe belonged, had kept their squalid homes in those parts for a long time. They were a nation tough in war and extremely numerous, and they had been undisturbed for many years. When they learned that John, as he advanced, had brought his standards into their own territory, they were terrified by his first approach and hastened to send meek ambassadors to sue for peace. The general received them calmly in the middle of the tents and they, begging for pardon, peace and safety for their tribes, submissively poured forth these prayers: "Word of your powerful reputation, great general, of the vigor of your mind, of your valor and trustworthiness, has flown on before you, at once terrifying all our tribes and drawing them in gratitude to your rule. With bent necks, the renowned race of Astrican men submits itself, brave hero, to your commands. The elders of our nation both approve and seek a treaty with you and since they are willing to serve, they prepare their necks for the yoke. Spare them, renowned general, as they make this

plea. We ask for nothing more than peace and undisturbed tranquility after your war is concluded."

Even as this envoy was speaking, the ignorant throng of soldiers began to murmur right in the general's headquarters: "How long is hunger going to kill off our army without any prospect of revenge? There is no hope now, no salvation, and our pitiful band of men is exhausted." When this sound reached the general's ears, he was deeply disturbed and whispered to Ricinarius: "Put an end at once to the ill-starred complaints of those worthless soldiers. What madness in their hearts, what confusion of mind drives these wretched bands headlong into disaster? They see the ambassadors. These people are asking for a treaty with me. They stand here humbly and beseech us with prayers, even as those men reveal our own affairs and our secret malady. Woe to this worthless gang who cater to their stomachs like cattle or wild beasts." Ricinarius went out immediately and, repeating the general's commands, quickly stopped the murmuring with his calm words. Then, when quiet had been restored, the general lost no time in replying to the ambassadors: "You have heard the wrath our army vents. Our soldiers are eager for a bitter fight and are getting ready to make their way across your nation's land. Our empire, however, always wants to spare those who are subject to us. We subdue men who embrace warfare, but the humble we adopt as our friends. Go therefore, gentlemen, and if you request this treaty with me in unswerving loyalty to us, send your children as pledges to my camp and keep peace with me. The entire Astrican race will remain secure and powerful under our Emperor." Having said this much, he loaded them with gifts. They in turn claimed that they would serve the Roman empire and promised to bring their children as pledges of peace. They proclaimed their esteem for the Latin people, for their valor and fidelity, and they praised the strength and loyalty of both the Emperor and the general. Then, when the peace had been arranged, they departed.



At some distance from them, weary and thirsting, the Ilaguas were wandering through the untilled fields, no longer able to endure their great suffering and their dreadful hunger. No way to safety, no road appeared for them. Behind them stood John, before them, the excessive heat of the sun. Death rose before the tribes' eyes on all sides. They were able neither to advance nor to retrace their steps. And so the anxious throng, thrown into confusion by the dangers around them, groaned aloud and prayed for death. Then Fortune turned against them and convinced them to return, changing the abominable nation's course for the worse. And so, as the lot of war would have it, the unholy Syrtic band returned, not so much in search of armed combat, but merely attempting an uncertain flight. The Roman horsemen were riding as scouts all around them, and with the Latin troops rode the loyal Mazax, seeking side by side a trace of where the enemy nation might be. They had received no report and had seen no enemy close by, when suddenly they spied the glow of fires through the dark night and, in doubt, pondered whether they were those of the Astrices or of the Ilaguas who had turned back in their direction.

A gloomy dawn, lifting her rays from the ocean's billows, moved a dark team along its course that morning. She drew with her a baleful sun and the sun's horses, bearers of an evil fate. The clouds hid their course, and Phoebus revealed a dusky sky with his murky light. But see, a messenger, riding hard, reports that he has seen countless fires flickering beneath the silent night, spread far and wide at a distance from his own unit. As to whether the weary Ilaguas had turned around and returned or the Astrican nation were moving their camp close to the Roman positions there was no definite word in his report. And so, finding himself in a tight spot, the general, ever resourceful, searched his heart for an explanation. As he stood silent and in doubt, see, loyal Cusina suddenly came up to him, arriving with a large and crowded band of followers. Excited and happy, he addressed his commander as follows: "The fugitive Ilaguas, tired and unarmed, are setting their sluggish force in

motion, preparing to cross this way by stealth. The time is at hand - take up our standards, mighty general - the time is at hand to destroy this weak and weary tribe. What's more, the work will be easy for our soldiers now. A dark river washes the shady banks along its overgrown margin. It is hedged round by trees of different kinds and dark rushes. To this place the nation is bending its course. Let us get to the river first and take possession of its entire stream." His words were well received by the men even as he spoke, but the general, who had held the muttering of his weary soldiers in his anxious heart for some time, forbade them to set out at first. But who can foil or resist the unshakable will of God? And so, setting his army in motion, the general ordered his footsoldiers to pass in formation through the troops and squadrons of cavalry. The dust gathered in clouds above them, and the air was a confusion of sand, as John set out on that accursed march and Gallica revealed its baleful hills and gloomy, ill-starred fields. Now the sun rose in the sky and was setting lofty Olympus aflame with its firebearing chariot, as each of the armies reached midstream of the river. The Syrtic army checked its steps in terror and, turning back, deserted the banks of the stream and abandoned the very river it had sought.

The general instructed his men to locate their trenches and camp there and to put off combat, for he was preparing to join battle on the following day and so ordered them to take up arms only to defend the flowing stream and its supply of water. His advice was wise, if only the Roman band had then carried out the instructions he gave them. But a lamentable fate destined his men to be headstrong and bold. The soldiers ran here and there, spreading far and wide over the plains. The first of these provoked the first rank of the enemy and, in disorder, drawn up in no formation, these Latin troops clashed with the enemy, crying out with their accustomed battle cry. No bugle, after a captain's orders had reached it, heralded this sudden outbreak of hostilities with its cry. Nor did the tall battle standards stand in



position. Rather, without being drawn up in units, alas, and overconfident, this band ran amid the enemy, driven by an evil fate. In the first clash the Marmaridan ranks gave way to the rear in terror, and the Roman soldiers pursued them, joining in a heated battle with serried weapons. On the plain, the Latin horsemen transfixed with their spears the bodies of those who fled from the action. They stabbed their foes and pressed in on them as fear drove the vanquished Moors back among their camels.

At some distance, John, mighty in arms, was setting all his standards in order in protective positions and instructing his men where to locate the camp and its trenches. He ordered the officers again to attack the enemy only to protect the river water. And so, they drew up their lines. Cusina held the right flank and was surrounded by Massylian and Latin arms. Next to him was Fronimuth, brave in the arms of Rome and that powerful leader, John, graced with the happy name of his own commanding general and yet not as happy in his lot. Huge Putzintulus held the left flank along with the bowman, Geisirith, and Sinduit in his towering arms. In their midst stood the great leader of leaders and, given the fact that a heavy fate already hung over them, spoke words of advice to his comrades in vain. In front of him Tarasis circled the close-ranked phalanx of infantry with his shielding force of cavalry and, galloping forward on his swift horse, made his squadrons ready.

Now see, as this was happening, a swift messenger came to his commander bearing news that the enemy was in confusion and turning their vanquished backs in flight across the fields. The soldier was not able, however, to make John abandon his wise counsel with this report. The general's mind remained steadfast. But the will of God in His fearful majesty was not in accord, and so the commander, as he hesitated, was persuaded to go to war by his guards, Ariarith, a brave warrior in the past, and good Ziper. Both of them were mighty thunderbolts of war whom the Massylian phalanx feared, and they were alike not only in valor but also in fate. Ziper began: "Help the Latins, mighty general. Your allies are involved in a heated

battle on the plains but, since they are few, they are thrown into confusion by the close-ranked enemy. Numbers overcome them. Let us follow our allies to war. Take up arms and bring aid to your men." At this point brave Ariarith was set afire with the love of battle and convinced the reluctant general to set his standards in motion. It was the words of this loyal aide that convinced the mind of the commander, and so the horrid bugle cried out with its deadly song and drove our companies into combat. All in vain, the well-formed units marched out, for an evil fate was pressing in on them. This was, however, Your pleasure, Almighty Father, as long as You wished to castigate the sinful people of Libya. Their faults were the cause of the great evil that was to come. The blame does not fall on our ruler.

When, from a distance, Carcasan saw the cloud of dust gathering, he wasted no time in stirring his own Nasamonian army, steadying their frightened hearts with these words: "Unconquered nations, your well known valor has persuaded me to make trial of this Roman force in battle. This is the day on which horned Ammon promised to give you the soil that is destined to be yours. March out now and fearlessly face the enemy in arms, displaying even now your ancestral claim to glory. Let each one of you fight fiercely in hand-to-hand combat and put his faith in the fate that is ours. Great divinities grant their aid, and, rely upon it, a clear victory will be granted to you. Comrades, put aside craven fear and carry your accustomed strength and spirit into battle with you." Carcasan had no sooner said this than a horrifying shout ran through the Syrtic camp, and as the din of their savage commotion grew, the Marmaridan army raged on. Their own harsh lot stirred their fury, and the spirit of war goaded their savage bands on, lashing the backs of the barbarians with its bloody whip. Then, as their wild hearts swelled with madness, their countless cavalymen began to leave their camp and to make their way to the plains.

There was a stretch of river in the middle of the battlefield just right for the deceptions of war and the deceptions of the Massylians. A thick grove impeded the



soldiers' weapons with its entwined foliage. Barren tamerisk covered its hidden basin along with wild olives and their pungent leaves. Here the Marmaridan lines took up positions with the positions of the Latin lines opposite them. Here they both made their first moves in this grim combat, but the forest blocked the men's weapons and winged spears with the barrier of its branches, for the thin shafts could not penetrate it even when they were thrown by a powerful hand. Riders could not turn their horses freely against the enemy, and soldiers, everywhere entangled in the thick branches, were unable to bring their long javelins into play. The terrain kept the anxious captains and their cautious general from battle and forced the front lines to take a stand. And so they checked their advance. No one was bold enough to commit himself to battle and all halted on the steep bank.<sup>34</sup> The general bravely approached the place and, with his guards around him, prepared to attempt some path across the river and through the thick grove. In the meantime the Nasamonians, watching from hiding as a safe route was being found and held, fell upon their enemy. Our loyal band, all hedged round, turned in flight and because of the swift arrival of their savage enemy did not even hurl their spears. Rather, as soon as it caught sight of the Nasamonians, it fled, swifter than the west wind, no slower than a shadow seen in a dream.

Now see how an unmistakeable report, flying onward, brought the great general news that the loyal Moors were even then abandoning the battle without a fight, driven by an overpowering terror. At John's command, wise Paul along with Amantius, hastened to relieve these men with their aid. No trace of these Moors was found, however, for the Mazax, as they fled, did not in their fear look back at the battle or turn their faces toward the enemy. In that moment the captains turned and fled too, and their frightened officers all rode away, breaking the chain of command as they did. The victors, the Ilaguas, then pursued their scattered lines, as their cry made its way to the sky. At that point the enemy force unleashed its troops from their

positions in all of the ravines, sending them out across the wide plain. You would have thought that a gap in the earth had suddenly burst open and that men had arisen out of it. Swooping down on them on this side and that, they surrounded our allies, and by the thousands, closed ranks and overran our scattered commanders. The sky was shut out by the spears that they hurled, and a darkness as of night pressed down on the plains far and wide. The pitiful remnants of our lost units groaned as their horses were cut down by bloody weapons all over the battlefield, and the enemy raged on and on, untiring, tough and unyielding. That day might have dashed the entire Latin people in a single catastrophe, had not the Almighty Father, taking pity on them from Heaven above and guarding the Roman companies even while they were surrounded by so many thousands of the enemy, saved the fugitives by having mighty John himself address them. Indeed it was John who, when he saw the allied battalions leaving the field, shouted like thunder and roused their anger to a higher pitch with these words: "If we are to die, comrades, and if it falls out that man's final misfortune is gathering the Latins to itself as it prepares to lay them low in this cruel combat, then why should I die a woman's death? If life remains, why should I flee in fear? Citizens of Rome, turn your reins now. Put your standards in place, comrades, show your contempt for the fury of this nation and be bloodthirsty as you hazard a fight. Either we shall conquer the enemy, if God Himself wishes it, or, if the sins to which I too contributed stand in the way, then at least we shall not in death lack the praise we deserve. Put an end to this flight and draw your weapons. Let each man do as he sees me do." So he spoke and, scowling, let the growl behind his teeth grow to a crescendo. Then he grasped the gleaming hilt of his sword and in his rage to draw blood withdrew its blade. At the sound of his voice the reliable part of the army returned. Then a heated battle arose as lances flew here and there in a constant cloud. Breastplates and helmets resounded and their brazen bosses groaned under the blows, as the men poured out their red life from broken veins in their vitals.



Haughty Ziper rode bravely right through the middle of the enemy weapons, committing bitter deeds in his rage and cutting down the Syrtic force with his own deadly arms. With him went Solumuth, a warrior like him but unlike in fate. Together they pierced with their long pikes the breasts of many who came against them. Now a spear would transfix the trembling liver or heart of a man, now they would cleave hollow temples with their winged steel. One lopped off a head, the other cut off a great legbone. You might have been watching twin lions romping through a flock with their savage jaws. Now one fiercely tears his spoil apart with his claws, now the other crushes the tender cattle with his bloody teeth and delights in the warm blood. In another area Bulmitzis and mighty Ariarith, fierce Dorotis and the armorbearer John were laying low, with one blow or another, the doomed bodies of those who kept coming against them over the broad plain. One warrior wielded his sword in arrogant frenzy, while the other stood tall and put his superior skill with the spear to use. One shot stiff arrows from his twanging bowstring. Another, whose power lay in his martial skill, raged and roared as he fought with both weapons. And in their midst, the general himself glistened with his lightning blade, as he held back the enemy phalanx in terror. They tell in song that it was in this way that Jupiter in his armor made the Giants tremble in war, when the stroke of his thunderbolt destroyed those fearful brothers with the searing wound he inflicted on them.

Our troops would have been victorious then, had not angry Fortune denied their success. Now an evil band of countless men rose up as the Marmaridan infantry advanced. Around them on all sides flew thick flights of spears, and heavy oaken branches and menacing stones fell like thunderbolts. The field was covered with black dust, and the soldiers were so pressed that they were scarcely able to see their own weapons. But our general struggled on, standing firm against every armed assault and forbidding his men to turn their backs. And so, as total confusion and rout threatened them, two of his armorbearers fell. Huge Ariarith went down but not

beneath a single blow, and great-souled Ziper sank under the hundred wounds he took. A powerful shot even pierced the general's horse as he galloped close to the foe, but he bravely took the spear from the body of his swift steed with his right hand, broke it and, in his rage, hurled it in the face of his enemy.

As he watched his allies being slain and saw his own wounds, the general bellowed and then, mounting another horse, settled himself on its lofty back. Terrifying with his threatening mien, he plunged forward, breaking through the dense ranks that faced him. Then, along with his comrades the general cut a path through the enemy force with his sword. Their lines fled, driven by the terror he instilled, as the hero regained some ground for himself and his men and steered a course straight to the heart of the enemy concentration. Then, forming his troops beneath their standards once again, he held back the Massylian companies with his own arrows. At that point in the battle none of the enemy heroes could challenge him in his fury, and any man who pursued him received in return a wound from his turned bow. If anyone happened to make for him, he was cut down, pierced at a distance through his panting breast with the spear John brandished, and any men who besieged him on the flank gave up their violent souls beneath his winged javelins, whose shafts pierced them on either side.

In fact the Nasamonians gave up challenging the standards of the general and, still seething with rage, spread their horses out over the broad plain in a ring. But they killed those who deserted their standards in flight, who took fright at the bitter threats the first conflict presented and turned their backs to flee.

There was one outstanding captain, conspicuous because he bore the general's name and no less conspicuous for his valor, a man illustrious in the Roman arms. When our general saw him from afar, fleeing from the battle on the broad plains, he called after him with these words: "Is this your loyalty? Is this the way we make war: to assure the destruction of the Roman army? Are you abandoning your command?"



To ride to what place, unhappy man? It is because of you that our poor soldiers and our reputation are perishing." When he heard the general's words, the captain felt ashamed and in that very moment grief flamed up in his tough frame. It was in fact this unlucky pang of shame that drove him to face the pursuing tribes again, for a cruel death was pressing in on him even in his eagerness to crush the enemy companies. He struggled to defend his hard-pressed comrades, and foes who had the upper hand now fell, and comrades were rescued in the moment of their defeat as the fates of his falling men were reversed. At first fortune aided the bold warrior as he raged, proud in the slaughter he was wreaking, striking down the bodies of the enemy with one deadly blow or another. He was like a panting tigress that roams in fury over the Hyrcanian fields because she has been robbed of the cubs a hunter stumbled upon and took from her lair in the Caucasus. The man brings them to be a spectacle for the kings of Persia, goading his horse with iron spurs in fear. But the tigress, who is like her mate and swifter than the west wind, grieves in spite of her ferocity for her tender litter and flies on. That was the way that captain struggled to attack the native tribes. He lopped off the head of one man with his sword and, hurling the dying man's spear, laid another low from a distance. One soldier he stabbed through the breast with his mighty lance, another he threatened with his quivering spear, piercing the man's shield, hand and side at the same time. Still another saw his leg cut off by a wound as he died and, falling amputated beside it, grieved for the leg he had survived. Here a wounded man lay maimed by a fallen horse. The bubbling gore flashed up high and its stream mingled with the warm sands. In a thousand ways that fiery champion inflicted wounds on this side and that, wherever fortune offered him the opportunity. But now, tired and panting, his horse began to steam and refused to run. The Moorish line advanced, growing in strength as it came on. Camalus and Ceraus and fierce Stontaus followed them, and the huge army surrounded its foe, as before them thick flights of lances added confusion to the field of combat. His

shield, as it blocked the incoming spears, emitted a brazen groan and resounded with a hollow din. The enemy pressed in, shouting, and harassed the hero, whose shield's steady boss was now thickly covered with missiles. He toiled beneath its very protection and was oppressed by the weight of all those spent arms. The thick brushwood increased his fatigue as well, as he struggled with the throng that fell upon him. Giving way little by little, he craftily made his way to the nearby shore, protecting his right side all the time with the waves of the sea. He turned to the left as he went along, while protecting his back with his shield and defending his face and the path in front of him with his weapons. He was like a fearless lion that proclaims his valor with a roar as a frightened circle of hunters besieges him. The wild beast opens his awesome jaws, emitting a long rolling growl as he rouses his wrath, and his fury is full of confidence and power. No man has the spirit or bravery to attack him; rather they come at him from afar with nothing more than cries and hurled spears. With fury like that, although pressed hard by the throng, the captain went away, holding to the curve of the shore and keeping off their spears with his shield.

There is a long steep cleft in the middle of the beach that is washed by the waves at the edge of the sea as a river washes its banks. As its waters make their way out to sea, it cuts off the fields beyond it with its bitter waves. Into this place seaweed and mud flow back, and their deep deposit decays beneath the ripple of the current. When it reached this point the hero's horse took fright at the black seaweed and in his fear turned his back. Then, snorting, he pricked up both of his ears as a sign of his fear, turned his flank and foamed<sup>35</sup> like a wild beast. He rolled his eyes as he looked around him and did not dare to make trial of the awful danger before him. But the great-souled leader, even as he struggled to resist his attacker, alas, completed the course of both his journey and his life. For the close-ranked enemy pursued the warrior with shouts, forcing him backward in confusion. Finally, spurring his horse again and again, he doubled the lashes of his whip, striking the



mighty shoulders of his mount, and the horse, under the lash of its rider, raised itself up and attempted to take the impassable path before it at a gallop. As it fell it sank down, swallowed up by the watery chasm, and the unholy earth sucked up its rider into its cruel maw as well. And so Fortune rescued the hero, snatching him from his enemy and sheltering him so that he did not have to stand unarmed or humbly beseech his attackers with prayers. And it gave him a grave so that his body would not lie uncovered on the Libyan sands.

#### Book VII

In the meantime our general, his standards protected by his troops, was marching along a safe route. Wearily he approached the walls of a small city along with the allies who had returned to his colors. Here the army's need for food was satisfied, here, after combat, his men were permitted to enjoy safety, here the fever of the horses was cured with water and, as they were fed, their lamentable hunger gave way. The thirsty soldiers now cared for their horses in the streams nearby and took joy in the water they had themselves longed for. Recalling their earlier misfortunes, they poured cool streams of water over their bodies. In time, as they ate, they felt a little of their strength returning and after the anguish of war enjoyed the contentment their cups of wine brought. Now black night fell over the land and put off the labors of the world as it obscured the forms of things beneath the dark sky. A sodden night's sleep followed, bringing sweet solace for the soldiers now and embracing them with its silent wings. The welcome repose of that night poured out her treasures and relaxed their drooping eyelids. Their hearts lay quiet and forgetful of evils and of themselves, while the rest of their bodies shook their weary limbs with heavy breathing.

In the confusion of this situation, however, the general was passing a sleepless night, turning over countless cares in his heart. The paternal commander,

moved by piety and weeping for the death of so many men, groaned and let tears fall from his eyes. Ricinarius was there with him, a comfort to the general and a partner in his struggles. He always bore his share of evil mixed with good, not sleeping apart with the common soldiers but present as a sober friend and a man strong in valor, who would never fear to lay down his life for his country.

The savage Persians knew all the accomplishments of this man, his character and strength, his good counsel and endurance, his distinguished service as a warrior and finally his love of peace and generous loyalty. Africa too knew what he had accomplished among the hostile Moors, and his paternal commander himself knew that the man had often endured hard work beside him. And so love grew between them and an eagerness to please marked the relationship of the two men. He thought of John as his father and John thought of him as a true son born of his blood. And so it was that, sleepless, each sadly told the other of the day's events, reviewing the noble deaths that had occurred on that luckless plain. The general spoke first: "Man indeed watches in vain, unless he watches with God. Nor can anyone win a war relying upon his own power. It is the Almighty alone who crushes the enemy, moving, overturning, destroying all things. The Roman race, however, is not all that hateful to the Lord on high, for it was His will to save my men even when they were pressed by so many thousands of the foe. Now I have decided to make good our losses as soon as I can and make a sudden attack, while the conqueror remains secure in this place, imagining that those he defeated are in flight. How often, after all, have the conquered themselves conquered proud men in combat! A greater victory is given to those who are fewer as well. Consider then, my dear comrade, what might be the better course for our army."

Then calm and grave, Ricinarius spoke, giving his commander the welcome counsel he had requested: "It is holy to look to God's help, great leader, but why are you so eager to attack again? Your well known valor and the power of your mighty



right hand move you, and yet there is no need now to expose your life to uncertain perils. Cruel Fortune has made the enemy proud and bold with its aid, but the hearts of those who flee from battle are always cold with fear. Even great valor, broken by the fear of death, is timid. It is the nature of but a few to stand up under the tumult of war, especially after a battle such as this one which has shaken our men with its recent slaughter. Most of our force is scattered but unharmed. Gather these, brave general, and order them to restore their strength. Then seek out and stir to action those tribes in other parts which have always stood loyally by their treaties with us. Bid them to come also,<sup>36</sup> moving their shields of reed and their standards. In this way, the entire army, when concentrated in one place, will be safe, since it will no doubt find whatever supplies it wants for sale. As you know, these native people bring many flocks with them, and our ships will make it to this coast, bringing bread and wine, since the weather has now opened the sea for sailing. If we do this, our army will repair its shattered power and our companies, forgetting their fear, will renew the fight."

His advice found favor. Heeding the excellent words of his loyal friend, the general bade his swift messengers to bring his orders to all of his subordinates. They flew off on horseback in every direction, carrying the instructions of their commander, and quickly assembled both the natives and our own men. No commander was ever able to resume fierce combat after being forced to make a tactical retreat with the speed of John, a man truly remarkable for his vigilant spirit. Earlier good fortune did not puff him up with pride because of his success in past wars, nor did adversity break him, steady as he was in valor. And now, rosy dawn had arisen from the ocean, sweeping away the shadows of the dank night. When the general saw its white light rising, he washed his hands and his face, which was still framed by hair stiff with the dust of yesterday's battle. Then, stretching out his open hands, he prayed: "Almighty Creator, Power and Glory of the universe, unfailing

Salvation and Father of the world, You Who under a sure covenant arrange all things, Who turn and rule by Your own motion, You change the seasons but are unchanged in them, as You roll open the year in four successive stages. You measure out the day in twelve equal hours and renew all things in their order but are Yourself renewed by no other, for You are at once the Author and abiding Lord and Founder of the earth. I believe, Almighty Father, and confess how great Your power is. Their evil divinities deceive these poor tribes who believe in them. You, however, often permit Your own people to be tried, but Your devotion to them makes You quickly lift them up again. Draw near and offer solace to Your weary men. Lift up the Roman army and lay low the haughty Massylians who long for war. Be quick to stay our destruction, I pray, and as our Ruler, take us into Your care."

As he made this prayer, the paternal commander was moved by a sense of duty, his eyes filled with tears which bathed his face and, anxiously weighing the danger facing Libya, he groaned again and again. At this point the Almighty Father took up the tears and words of the grieving general and determined to revitalize the Latin force. The allies, whom the horror of war and fear of the enemy had scattered, came back. They reported to the general that many men remained unharmed and that they were waiting at Iunci for him to follow. The news that these comrades were safe provided him with some small joy and solace in the midst of evil, as the general drew all his men together by rousing them with a brazen trumpet call. Still apprehensive, they formed a loose circle and stood around him, depressed, with tears even now dropping on their breasts. Their gracious commander spoke to them in a gentle voice. Encouraging the men and relieving their fears, he began with these words: "Comrades, there is no need of tears which will serve only to break your brave spirits in war. Roman soldiers are never beaten by adversity. Why this excessive weeping, my friends? See, all of our allies have come unharmed from the very midst of the enemy, and they inform us that others have also survived at Iunci. If our allies are



alive there is nothing that anyone can imagine he has lost at the hands of the enemy. The spoils whose capture by these men you perhaps regret will remain safe and even increase. The enemy you see puffed up with pride by this easy slaughter will learn to his heavy cost what battle can achieve along with Roman might. Then you will rejoice, as brave as ever, to carry off both your own spoils and those of the Moors at the same time. Ease your grieving spirits, put aside your cares, my Latin comrades, and drive these unworthy fears from your breasts. Victory will yet come to our cause."

These were the things the commander told the others to restore their happiness. Although he himself was grieving, he put on a cheerful countenance for his friends and gave them hope with his appearance, for he kept his cares pressed in his heart. Then, making for Iunci, he drew together the Roman army and arranged to have the unit commanders, the men and the brave officers return to their own positions, restore their weary horses with the care they required and place their hope in the fight that would follow. He himself struck out in haste along the coastline, where he hoped to be able to refresh his allies with a regular ration of food. After doing that, he left the coast and made for the walls on the heights above. There, in the middle of a forest, rises the city of Laribus, absolutely secure and fortified by the new walls that had been constructed by His Imperial Highness Justinian, mighty ruler of the eastern and western worlds and glory of the Roman realm. At this place the general ordered his allies to come quickly to meet him, along with the captains and tribes which he knew had been loyal to his standards in the first contest.

In the meantime, a messenger with bad news had dashed the spirit of the Tyrian city when he told it of the recent dire battle and of the lives lost on that cruel plain. The people were indeed dumbstruck, and yet there was one hope in which they could trust, for the report told that their leader was safe.

The same winged message reached the ears of the unhappy wife of John, the dead captain, at the same time. When she heard it, the warmth left her stunned heart and, as she began to tremble, her face grew suddenly pale. The pitiable woman then fell and her grief snatched away the light of day, wrapping heaven and earth in sudden darkness. Next, all at once, the sinews of her body went limp, and the image of death held her eyes closed for some time. Her maids ran to her side quickly and made an effort to relieve their sinking mistress. They rubbed her breasts with their hands and were able with difficulty to rekindle the faint breath of life within her cold limbs. Lifted by their devoted hands, she sat up but did not shift her gaze, for she was senseless, wounded with grief and forgetful of herself. Soon the weakened woman regained full consciousness but still seemed confused. Finally she began to speak, still shattered by the first pangs of grief: "My heart is stricken with sorrow and yet my eyes shed no tears. Why should the mouth of a woman so wretched not break into lament? Can a grief that burns so hot slip from our minds even in the midst of suffering so great, or is it grief itself that denies tears as well as words? Was this the miserable lot in life that drove me on, that led me as a foreigner to Libya, following on land and sea the weapons of my husband? Why did I not range through the battle myself? If I had, the cruel destiny of a grave, concealed in that unforeseen cleft in the earth, would have carried off<sup>37</sup> the two of us together, poor creatures. Then, my hands in his, I would have bound our sweet breasts together and felt our bodies mingle as I embraced my husband. It would have been sweet to die even in our sadness, if only the fates had granted to one who loved so passionately the right to make one more journey with him as my companion, this time among the dead. Ah, poor man, before whom those savage tribes trembled, you lie forever, wrapped in the sands of another land. It was the call of valor that drove you to death. Why, when your men were in flight, did you choose to return alone and, with too much confidence in yourself, drive off those countless companies? To what place shall I



turn and run? Whither rush? As whose captive shall I beg for aid? You were my resting place, poor woman that I am. Without care for myself, I was not afraid to cross the deep with you, even when the seething west wind tossed our trembling ships in the rising flood. Unhappy wife, widowed of such a husband, shall I be able without you to make my way through those dreadful storms again? Oh, if only the kind fates had snapped my grief in midcourse, if only cruel death had not allowed me to shoulder this overwhelming burden for such a long time, as the days drag on. Then instead, gathered to the dead by yesterday's turn of fortune, I would take delight in the countenance of my husband John." The pitiful woman filled the Sidonian city with this lament, groaning as she wept. The lofty ceilings augmented the sound with the echoes of her wailing, and the eyes of everyone around her rained salty streams as their loyal hearts burst with moaning.

Now the good lord Athanasius was also giving thought to each pressing matter one after the other, and anxious as he was about the state of affairs, his country and his safety, he ordered all of his own troops to march into the broad plain and hasten to the aid of the brave general. His venerable old age was diligent in rousing his men, and their own respect and love for so great a man compelled them as well. His earnestness, his age and his industry, along with his encouraging words, were a great help in calming their troubled spirits. And so this patriarch of the people ordered great quantities of supplies to be sent, as he roused the allies and urged them forward. As an elder held in esteem, he also sent friendly advice to the brave commander. And the remarkable boy, Peter, taking everything in hand as if he too were an elder, ordered his swift attendants to bring messages to and from his mighty father. What an admirable boy, whose sense of duty sparked his determination to protect Libya with his sire!<sup>38</sup> Whatever I might think or say<sup>39</sup> about this act, the fact that even as a boy you understood in your tender heart the problems of your father is a truly remarkable sign of your character. Even now, as news of you reached them,

the tribes grew afraid, they trembled and grew weak with fear, and when they heard the name of little Peter, they made that fear visible with their hands and in their eyes.

At the same time, the general's subordinates were even more remarkable than usual in the manner in which they devoted every thought and effort to the realm and to their mighty leader, as they drove their wavering companies to march out to war. They exhorted their men, bent and stirred them with their instruction. One man would plead with his comrades, another would roughly chastise them, for any good citizen of the Empire hates procrastination in a crisis, and what was more, sorrow and a sense of duty and their love of great John moved these men's minds. Furthermore, the hearts of all turned in that anxious moment to the faces of others, tranquil and benign, and although they were far away, they saw and heard them in their minds. Each one prayed to the Lord in the name of his mighty leader, begging for his safety, and each was afraid, as he turned these things over in his mind. Each troubled his loyal heart with reflecting on the tough challenges that lay ahead, in the same way his kind lord did and Ricinarius did along with him. Indeed their hearts were saddened by the terrible catastrophe that had occurred. Each was afire to begin the journey, to see the new units that had been recruited, each was eager to see the homage they would pay, bestowing kisses even to the feet of their commander, and so each made ready all of his gear, giving careful attention to anything that might be a concern in battle.

Loaded wagons groaned over the roads, the route swarmed with tall camels and the smith's hammer struck resounding brass, as they gathered from far and wide over the plains the supplies of grain and the great number of arms that normally had to be distributed to the Latin soldiers. Now, from this direction and that, the captains and brave officers rushed forward, bearing the victorious eagles and assembling their units in formation.



John, the son of Stephen, a young soldier of discerning judgement and a man skillful at reconciling factions, was sent out on a special mission. It happened that savage Ifisdaias and loyal Cusina, who had conceived a mutual hatred, then held in their hands the seeds of an intolerable civil war. Indeed this coming war had begun to fire their barbaric hearts with the desire to make move and counter move against one another, and jealousy was doubling their anger. Therefore, the commander ordered John to negotiate peace and harmony between the two chiefs, to restrain both men and to summon their tribes themselves to assist in the current crisis. Another man could not have bent their hardened minds or placated their fierce spirits, but John could tame wild tigers with his words, soothe fierce lions with the ease of his speech and ward off the evil poison of snakes with his talk. He separated them in their fury, one to one side, one to the other, put a stop to their unholy quarrel and, with his extraordinary skill, strengthened the treaty between their tribes. What fears, what toils did he again and again endure as mediator between these two, as he tried to bend their great anger! But for his country he was pleased to endure many cruel dangers and so made peace between these tribes and moved them out to battle together.

Then the faithful commander Cusina raised the battle cry, and, equipped with various armaments, gathered countless units of Moorish troops to lead them into battle. All of the fields groaned as they shook their reed shields and tramped across the broad plains. That brave commander armed thirty captains of his own and, although a thousand men followed each one, he took greater joy in the fact that he was the link to those Roman forces which the world's mighty Emperor permitted to be allies in peace and his agents in war. Indeed these were the troops he relied upon to put down the rebel tribes and their wars.

Eager Ifisdaias arrived with a hundred thousand men and filled the broad plain of Arsurus with his herds. Although his troops were somewhat weaker in valor,

he nevertheless armed a menacing force that was terrifying to behold when he drew their ranks and weapons together and joined in heated battle with a foe. Iaudas, in service to our realm, also gave aid. With his son he armed twelve thousand troops, soon to be joined by the commander Bezina, who led his entire band there at the same time and filled the fields with his cattlemen.

When our general had consolidated his power by incorporating these countless companies of men into his army, he set his standards in motion and headed for the tough battle ahead, disgorging savage tribes like rivers over the land. Now it happened that the Austur were massacring the country folk with their deadly weapons on the Mammensian plain, and seizing part of Byzacium along with a second share of spoils. Antalas had once again linked his own army with the troops of the enemy and was on the way to war. Rumor of the general's arrival went as a messenger to the Syrtic camp, lashing the winds with its wings. It flew from mouth to mouth, terrifying the proud enemy by shrieking its bitter message and telling what mighty tribes had come to battle in support of our general. And now it whipped up greater anger, as savage Antalas, always clever, spread the story that the bands of Moors who had joined the Latin standards were cowards at heart. When he heard this, fierce Carcasan wanted to face the enemy at once, but the son of Guenfan restrained him with his instruction and advice, adding these words in closing: "If you want to conquer the Romans, mighty leader, be so good as to hear these few words that may save your life and learn exactly what you must do. You must not join battle in this land. Your brave soldiers who have not yet been shaken by the death and destruction of war, are tough and frenzied, but with men like this you will not be able to withstand the enemy when the fury of battle takes hold of him, nor to stand up to the Latins until hunger begins to afflict them. No, set your force in motion and pretend that you are in flight to the rear. Surely their mighty army will pursue us in this flight. Then, when we have destroyed whatever fields we find ripe with crops,



they will find no provisions. And so, either our enemy will be scattered or will waste away with hunger. If you try savage battle at that point, you will be victorious, for hunger as well as the sword will cut down your already conquered foe."

This unfortunate advice found favor, and their general abandoned his trenches. The brave Roman commander pursued the fleeing force, doubling the distance of his entire earlier march. Now, as he approached the enemy, he kept trying to bring their standards together in order to join battle. God had not, however, yet granted our general his hour of victory and so kept his army off, deeming it worthy in time of even better triumphs. And so their column continued its march over the sprawling plains, and the rising dust stirred by the enemy beyond appeared more and more clearly not to be far in advance of our men. Valor increased as their minds were filled with rancor and hatred, and they were on the point of trying battle when the day grew suddenly hot. The sun had risen higher on its panting steeds and hung balanced in the middle of the sky. It was that time of day when a shortened shadow can claim no more than the ground between a man's two feet. The African wind, that breathes fire, began to scorch the land with its gusts and dissipated the strength and fury of the soldiers. All their bodies grew parched and stiff beneath the blasts of the fiery wind, their tongues grew dry, their faces turned red and deep breathing shook their breasts as they gasped and sent fire from their nostrils. Once their spittle was gone, their rough lips grew hot, and a scorching heat raged in their dry throats, all of the fluid in their bodies was disturbed and flowed from their inner organs. It oozed over their skin which the deadly heat of the air soon dried out and stripped from their bodies while it was still warm.

When our general John saw this, he put off battle and drew up his thirsty force on the site of a sweet spring. The army, its throats on fire, gathered at the cool waters and bent over them, in thirst. This is just the way countless bees gather on the ditches of a garden when, beneath the noon-day sun, they return from their feeding,

and their honey-making swarm drinks from its flowing stream. There, in the same way, after being scorched by the sun, every kind of creature rushed along the edge of the spring. The bits did not keep back the well-trained horses, nor did the loosely hanging ropes fastened over their mouths hold the camels. In a confused crowd every creature drank the water as it flowed from the spring to this side and that, and yet, even as they drank, they grew hot and thirsted for more. One man knelt at the water, another drank from cupped hands, still another stretched himself out and lapped the water from the stream with his tongue. One drank from a jar, another held a bowl or an urn. And now the streams were diminished, and a soldier would press his lips to the sand itself, which the horses had fouled by continually moving over it. The throng, burning as it was with thirst, did not even reject the water mixed with dung. To such lengths did the blasts of heat drive the poor creatures.

The Syrtic camp on the other hand was exceedingly frightened and confused, for danger threatened on either side, as the sun's cruel flame scorched it with its heat. In addition to the wind, the dead weight of their fear itself made them tired, increased their thirst and compelled the now resentful tribes to venture even further. The African wind was an obstacle, however, for it overpowered the soldiers and held them back with its fire. A horrible death closed in on the African hostages they had taken as well. The rebel brigands drove the poor devils forward, but the heat kept them back. Lances struck the backs of the poor creatures, and the African wind, seething with fire, threw their hearts into confusion. The groaning throng fell prostrate on the fields and there in the desert wastes succumbed to one fate or another. One man fell beneath the wind's flame, one beneath a wound a cruel blade inflicted, yet another beneath both, for with their swords the rebels laid low the bodies of those on whose lips there remained a fleeting breath. Now an even heavier blast of wind arose, knocking the Moor's bodies down in a confused heap and snuffing out many of their lives. Mingled with them over the grassland, the weary



horses fell, for this cruel lot denied them life too. And yet, fear still urged the enemy bands on, bidding them to continue their march through the desert. Nor did their terror permit them to pitch a camp; instead it drove the Massylian tribes toward even more distant regions. For fifteen days the powerful African wind grew hotter, burning everything with its ranging blasts of fire, and for the same number of days the enemy fled far from their foes and, in terror, positioned themselves at a great distance from the weary Latin soldiers.

Acting on the general's order to make a reconnaissance of the enemy's position, the tribune Caecilides set out accompanied by a number of hard-riding teamsters who liked him because of his daring bravery. The stature of this man had attracted the attention of the great general, for when it came to killing the foe he was no less powerful than Hercules. He was swift of foot, feared for his extraordinary strength and mature in counsel. Even when the tough Moorish tribes closed off every approach to their positions with blockades, even then he proved himself their better and crushed those savage people again and again at the head of his sharp-eyed troops. The Ilaguas fell before this man and trembled in battle with him and the Frexes trembled and the panting Naffur too. Yes, even the tyrant of the Vandal nation feared him. Our good lord and general was exceedingly fond of this brave hero, for he had often seen him shouldering the work of war among his own men, and indeed it was from his hands that he had received the rebels captured in the earlier combat. The Roman soldiers knew this man's brave deeds as well and had themselves rejoiced in his great victories. And so he went where he was sent.

Now the villanous brigands had taken possession of the fields around Iunci near the sea. They wandered around recklessly, burning all the plantations, putting them to the torch. But Caecilides had seized hiding places under the cover of night's darkness and then, through the very midst of the enemy, rapidly approached the walls of the anxious city. Such was his confidence in his sword. And here I sing of things

not unknown. This warrior was not afraid to face and overcome great danger on behalf of his fatherland. And so he was able to carry out the commands of his leader and to endure the mighty struggle his task entailed. He entered the gates and explored the secret places of the enemy. He made a circuit of their trenches, tracing each branch as he came to it, and learned all their positions by examining them when, luckily, they lay still and empty. He returned to his comrades from that patrol and then sought out his great leader. This man had just slipped through the countless bands of brigands without fear and now, when he looked backward and saw the Marmaridan tents so far away, he realized that his men were no longer in danger from the savage tribe and that the enemy were still devastating the land here and there. All this stirred his spirit to anger and he began to speak to his companions: "If we bear only words to the general, they will not be entirely credible, for we must all confess that we know only the area which the trenches bound. But to bring the plans of these people to our great leader, that would be accomplishing something of really great use to the Latin realm. Now is the time, comrades. Let us, while we have the chance, capture from the enemy some live<sup>40</sup> prisoners who will clearly unfold all the secrets of their chief Carcasan to our general." Now see, just when he finished speaking, the enemy warrior Varinnus, a terror himself in the past, came to meet the tribune with his grim crowd of followers. This man wore a feathered battle dress and should not be confused with the warrior whom the mighty Solomon cut down in an earlier combat, although it was true that both men came to war marked by a common native toughness in battle and close kinship as well. When Liberatus looked out and saw the native coming to face him, with weapons poised, obviously looking for a fight, he rushed in first and attacked his cavalry band. He pierced savage Veuman through the breast with his mighty spear and, wielding his heavy sword, added Marzin and black Lamaldan and Zeias to the slaughtered. He struck down brave Tilifan and Burcanta, Nathun and Sarzun, Tilian and the swordbearer Nican, and, to be their



companions among the shades, he despatched fearful Masan and Dexter, as he brandished his spear. Peter pierced bold Tarafan with his lance and, when Iammada fell upon Peter with his sword as he was struggling, Peter caught him nevertheless and slew him with his blade, severing his veins and sending the high temples of his head spinning away. Stephanus struck Altifan and Tarah cut down Jugurtha with his sword. Priscus killed Muriferus, Carosus killed Ielidesan and Silvutis Zembrus. Gorgius bloodied Aspur, piercing his groin with a single blow of the spear he was brandishing.

The defeated Moorish phalanx had now turned their backs in flight, and the victorious soldiers and their swift tribune pursued them. The thick cloud of dust their flight produced rose into the expanse of the sky, the hard hooves of the horses thundered everywhere and the plain lay covered with the sand they tossed up. Each side flew on, goading the flanks of their horses with their spurs again and again. Dust followed their bands and marked their path. In the same way the wind, when it breaks out of its prison, whirls tiny grains of sand along in its blast. Then the swollen north wind, freed from its Scythian chamber, rages over the plain. A horrible whirlwind flies on before it, twisted by the power of the south wind and, driven in a circle, churns up the sea and rakes the sandy earth.

Now our soldiers, giving way to the frenzy of battle, followed the fleeing enemy force over the fields, scattering their warrior band and laying them low in the grass with their warm blades. The tribune himself, however, spurned this impulse and would have no part of the slaughter. Rather, he flew here and there on his swift horse, attempting to take the enemy alive. Turning his lance butt foremost, he struck their limbs and threw their tall bodies to the ground. He chose four Moors, took them from their unit and bound them. Tying their arms with twisted knots, he deliberately saved the lives of these men, for he meant them to tell their secrets to the great general and with their own tongues expose things hidden until now. He boldly

seized Varinnus by the hair and lifted him from his horse. The unlucky Nasamonian trembled there, hanging on with his right hand, but our warrior soon let go of him, laying him low on the ground. Then he leapt agilely from his horse, fell upon the man's savage breast in an instant and, twisting his arms back, tied rough bonds around both of his hands. And so savage Varinnus was overcome and, accompanied by his comrades, was led away with both hands tied behind his back. Before long he stood before the feet of the general, staring at the ground. The entire Roman throng gathered around him at a run in order to get a look at him, and even the Massylian leaders joined them, anxious to learn how things stood and where his loyalty lay. When Caecilides, the man who had beaten him, was ordered to tell his story, he said: "In obedience to your great commands, mightiest of leaders, and with Christ as my comrade in battle, I rode through the heart of the enemy force and beheld the cursed camp which these men pitched in the wretched fields of Iunci. I entered the frightened city, engulfed as it was by war, and shared in its grief. There, to my surprise, I beheld great miracles, for their dwellings lay open, circled by no fortifications, protected only by the aid of God. The lofty peaks of its pinnacled roofs provided no turrets for its defense. A single priest soothed the people with the power of his word alone and so, in that way, a heavenly grace, made ready their simple minds. This man could really tame ravenous lions and placate fierce beasts with his words. Indeed the hearts of wolves are soothed by them and they refrain from harming tender lambs with their hungry jaws. The priest urges you at the same time to order a quick pursuit, for he is confident that the Roman cause will triumph if you come. One thing is certain: he will never give up his tearful prayers for your men and arms and for the Latin force, for he begs the Almighty continuously to crush our enemies and make the proud humble with His power. As I departed, I captured these rebels with great effort, and they will expose all of the evil secrets of their people to you and point by point inform you of their intentions."



The tribune finished describing the deed he had performed, but the general continued to look down at the captives with a fierce gaze for some time. Then angrily he said: "Tell me, you rascals, what adventures you intend. What ill-omened lot has driven you to return here<sup>41</sup>, across the Libyan fields, once more to make war, to attempt a forbidden course and, with your usual plundering, to lay waste the homes of the Carthaginians and the Latin people? Does Carcasan think that he was victorious? The hour is fixed in which God will subdue him in war, in which the Roman folk will see him taken captive by their army and in chains. Before the bugle's cry, recall for us what terror it was that turned your hearts to treacherous combat, that provoked your guile and your people's treacherous instincts."

Then the plumed Nasamonian replied: "Your harsh command moves me to admit everything. Your words may threaten me with the death I deserve, but I shall still include everything in my account. Brave Carcasan is the leader of our army. In his leadership lies the greatest hope for our realm and clearly will stay there. Prophetic Ammon proclaimed this to our tribes, granting the Moors the plains of Byzacium in war and allowing Carcasan to pass among the Libyan people in proud triumph and to restore peace to the world. With these words Bellona, Ammon's demon of war, drove these countless tribes to range once more over your land. Now it was indeed our commander's will to join in battle with you, but your enemy, the son of Guenfan, changed his intention and put off that hero's attack, turning his mind away from war with counsel that was deadly indeed for you. You see, these people who you are now likely to think are fleeing are not in fact driven by bitter terror, are not afraid because they have been beaten. They feign this flight so that hunger will wear down your force, and in doing this they shrewdly make more trouble for you. Don't believe for a moment that our tribes would flee, no, not even if the Emperor himself should come, should empty the entire world, bringing its resources to war. Although he held the sceptre of the Emperor of the Roman people,

and was marching across the entire Punic state as a victor in a bitterly fought war, not even Maximianus was able to engage in battle with these people. But now, when Ammon grants us success in war in his unambiguous replies, do you suppose that the Laguatan people have fled or will yield to you?<sup>42</sup> In your bitter resentment this is what you would like, my good general, but your fates will not have it so."

Considering it improper at that point that the madman rave on any further in his speech, John silenced him with these words: "Yes, I hope that you will hold these fields of ours with the clear title of your graves." With these words he ordered that five wooden stakes be erected in a row and, barking out the command, had the necks of the doomed men hung from two-pronged poles. And his attendants, quick to obey, did as they were instructed.

### Book VIII

After our general learned about this villainous plan, after all the natives' treachery lay exposed and he understood the cruel and perverse behavior of that abominable nation, then with silent gaze he went over everything again, letting his keen mind run over the various possibilities in search of the right course of action. And surely his sober wisdom would be better able to conquer the tribes than armed might. With a perfect grasp of what was at issue he went over the various problems he faced, quickly reviewing them one after the other and scanning the entire situation in his mind. This is the way the darting swallow flies about in search of tender food for her young. Now, close to the ground, she inspects the green grass, coming and going from place to place, now she searches the branches of a tall tree and cleaves the air on silent wings. At last the general put his mind at ease, settled on a plan and spoke to his comrades as follows: "Carcasan does not dare to trust in his own strength in a clash with our weapons. Cunning and tough - that's his way - always preparing to harass the Latin companies and then flee. Well let the scoundrel flee



as shrewdly as he can; he will not escape us. Instead, this excess of cunning will do him in. I must pitch my camp in the middle of the fields at Iunci which the plunderer now holds. If chance makes bold to join him in battle with me, he will be routed on those level fields, for our soldiers will make their attack better on the open plains, unimpeded on horseback, striking with javelin or arrow. But if this unholy nation deserts these places and flees, we shall take the coastline before them and order that no supplies leave those regions. And so our enemy will perish nonetheless. They will not be able to hold out for very long. No need for battle; foul hunger will strike and kill these abominable people. On the other hand, the sea nourishes us, bringing all our supplies on schedule and providing both food and drink. Now move your camp, comrades, and advance your standards in good order."

He had no sooner finished his speech than the towering horsemen and the slow moving infantry covered all the plains. Closely arrayed columns of men broke out over the fields and the whinnying of their horses grew louder.

Carcasan and savage Antalas, warned by their mounted patrols, had perceived his move. Suddenly, in noisy confusion, they too moved their camp. Afraid to take a stand on the open plain, they deserted that place and in their fear located their trenches in the lofty mountains where they formed a circle with their tall camels. The Roman army, in tight formation, seized the coast and filled the broad plains nearby with their tents. The Massylian captains placed the Latin men in the middle, fixed their reeds in the ground here and there across the entire plain and held all the avenues of approach. Then John himself gathered his ships from every harbor and ordered them to put in at the port of Lariscus. In this way their good lord brought relief to his comrades and to the loyal tribes with supplies, distributing them throughout the camp and the ranks of men.

While the brave general used this day with a skill that befitted him and prepared to make the rebellious tribes suffer, a revolt arose as a new obstacle, and in

every corner of the camp, madness afflicted the Latin troops with its senseless goad. Now, muttering to themselves over and over, the men roused their inconstant minds against their hearts. What grief, alas! They turned the weapons in their right hands against their own bodies and each prepared a sword for his own neck. What was this madness that set all of the Latin soldiers afire with the desire to utterly destroy their own army? "Surely some cruel fate was leading on their poor minds. Do you have no fear of your leader, Roman? Beware of the many wars that threaten, beware of the many enemies who you can be sure have positioned their fortifications around you. See how you are in fact preparing to overturn Libya in war and, along with it, all of these tribes. Villains, you have turned your weapons against the poor land itself. What about loyalty, alas, and where has holy trust fled? A cruel fortune was indeed struggling to take from their hands the triumphs which the soldiers themselves had gained.

These soldiers, looking at their general with envious eyes, began to use harsh words, to stir up the untroubled minds of their comrades and to fill their ears with whispers. Now they no longer imposed a limit on their hatred, but preached treason in the most outrageous way. In the same way, when a forest is set on fire and burns, the first flames set the conflagration in motion, as a small spark begins to kindle the trembling leaves, and fragile stems crackle with the tinder. Often you see black smoke first and small ashes being borne aloft, but soon Vulcan rises into the gusty vacuum above, and evil blasts consume the thickly wooded hills. This is the way, blinded by their madness, the soldiers worked themselves up little by little, this is the way they broke into threats: "Pathetic soldiers, how far will you follow this leader in war? Where on earth is he dragging your weary force? In what place is cruel death once more being made ready for you, poor creatures? Alas, he spends your lives as though they were cheap in one crisis after another and gives you no reward. He inflicts death upon us in bloody wars. Roman blood bathes these sands, and the plain



grows black with our mingled gore. Thirst and hunger burn us along with the west wind and its flames, and yet there is no glory for those who deserve it. To arms, citizens. Take up stones, torches, swords, whatever madness, whatever anger provides. Free our band of warriors from this unspeakable struggle by killing this general as he deserves." And so the camp, once stirred by this fearful commotion, was filled with shouts and the unholy murmur grew even louder. This mad band of insubordinates gathered and, when a meeting was organized, they united<sup>43</sup> their enthusiasms, honed their irresolute anger and chose a forbidden course. Then their horrifying shout truly confounded the camp, and the heavens resounded with savage cries not unlike those of the Nasamonian when he would attack their wavering fortifications, and throw everything into confusion. When this sound reached the ears of the general, he said: "Find out what madness is agitating my camp with this noisy tumult and put a stop to its rapid increase." The captain Tarasis went out first, anxious to determine the cause of what was happening. When he heard the confused din and the muttering of the men, he went closer in order to settle them with some calming words. But neither the captain's appearance nor his pleading, not even the honor of Rome could bend them, for all respect had fled from their minds and they even dared to taunt him by hurling stones. A cruel lot was driving the men on; fate, pressing in on them with the death that was to be theirs, and their own last day were drawing these poor creatures to themselves. A swift messenger was despatched on foot from the site of the confrontation to the commander, who was for a moment uncertain what to do. The messenger reported that the savage anger of the soldiers had indeed taken fire and that a civil war had suddenly arisen. The general roared aloud and, with a terrifying look on his face, seized his weapon. He left his own camp and its trenches in a rage and strode bravely forth. His guard followed and the captains and a loyal band of soldiers went with them. He took a stand on a high mound and soberly gave the wild rebels a terrible warning: "Did you, my comrades,

really imagine in your bitter rage, that I was some kind of beast and not a man? If the law of God and man sanctions civil strife, behold, I am here. Be quick, if you think that by my death war can be avoided and if you imagine that John is the cause of this war. Is this what a citizen's loyalty comes to? If Roman fidelity has so utterly abandoned your souls, well then, I shall wage war now with these native tribes. Our friend, brave Cusina, will always be loyal to our cause, as will his people, his fellow-citizens and his captains. As for you, you gang of cowards, get out of our camp. Go. Let Cusina move his shields of reed and come now. Let our friend, Ifisdaias, present himself with his men and Bezina and the swift contingent of our subject laudas."

He had no sooner spoken than the Moorish troops with standards in close array burst forth on all sides of the broad plain to bring aid to their leader. The Roman band seized their weapons with greater ferocity than ever and the soldiers, clad in their armor, dashed along all the trenches. Sluggishness did not infect their embittered minds, and the close-ranked enemy held no terror for them. The terrifying sight of their own master and of wise Ricinarius calmly giving advice began, however, to extinguish the flames in their frenzied minds. They put aside their threats and their gloomy Fury departed. Now their former rage caused the men to grieve. Now they humbly expressed their desire to bend their necks, not driven so much by the native tribes facing them but mindful of the imperial realm. They were moved by devotion and loyalty, by fear of the Emperor and by the gravity and valor of their master, as well as by Ricinarius, who calmly ordered them to fall back into formation. Then John ordered the lines on either side to halt briefly under the truce which each had accepted. These were the words he used in giving orders to the Latins: "See how many of our realm's nations follow our just commands and would be ashamed to have desired such transgression of the law. But if perchance you still prepare to pursue this bitter war and to glut your ignoble minds with it, then speak up. Am I to know what final intention remains in your minds? Am I to greet



comrades or crush rebels?" He had in fact no less power than Caesar had to terrify the Romans with his words of contempt when a rebellion threatened. The phalanx was struck dumb and felt ashamed. Humble and devoted they begged their master: "An unholy madness drove a few of us to attempt this criminal act. For those, the guilty, a just punishment properly remains. Let the penalty follow the offenders. As for the rest of us, we shall humbly follow the orders of our general and lord." Even as they spoke these words the innocent throng dragged forward the authors of the crime, handed them over in chains to their leader for their great offense and in this display of devotion atoned for their guilt. The army grew still then and the punishment exacted for their abominable crime steadied and settled their minds. As a result, an even greater fear of the general arose in all of the loyal tribes and so, as the soldiers grew calm again, he withdrew within his trenches in relief, and in yet another show of devotion all of his allies proclaimed with a shout of joy that they would obey the orders of their commander.

He immediately ordered the blaring horns to rouse the army with their raucous song. Then, setting his standards in motion, John left the coast and pitched his camp in the Fields of Cato. Having fortified those regions, the Syrtic bandits were in possession of a secure camp there. But now dire famine began to trouble the entire Marmaridan race. Only their cattle provided them with food, for they had no grain at all. When the mighty leader of the Roman people realized this, he prepared to surround those people with a siege, withdrew his standards for a number of days and kept his army out of the forests and their dangerous terrain. And so, thanks to the skill of the general, day after day went by without armed conflict, and this lull finally made the wavering rebel tribes risk venturing forth onto the plains. The unlucky Nasamonians imagined that this calm was clear evidence of Roman apprehension and so ordered their camp to be broken and then pitched again on level

ground. With death now hanging over them, they assumed once again their bold spirit and savage wrath.

The general withdrew his troops from their fortifications and convoked a council. He himself stood high on a mound as his chosen captains and brave officers came forward, and as the soldiers, arriving in their own closely packed units, rushed up by companies and squadrons. The Massylian contingent that was loyal to the realm assembled there as well along with the Latins just as if a regular unit of the fierce Roman army. The love and awesome fear of their master was the thing that compelled them all to meet there in the plains, united in spirit. Its appearance distinguished each tribe. These men iron provided with tunics; those with arms bare as was their custom, wore tunics of embroidered purple dappled with various colors. Some were protected by long shields, others by round ones. The Roman soldier, of course, stood tall in his helmet, while the Moor was covered by the cloak he wrapped around his body. Yet another man, sweeping his long hair from his forehead, leaned kneeling on his two spears or fixed his stout javelin in the solid earth. In the middle of them all, our general spoke encouraging words: "Roman comrades and sole hope of this weary land, the true salvation of Libya now depends on your arms. What we should do now is put an end to this war and to your hard toil. In short, we must fight." The army and the Latin troops rejoiced and set their standards in motion. A single voice cried out as the men, their captains and the Massylian band raised a mighty din. They showed their spirit, and the sound ran through the entire force like a murmur of joy. Not even the troubled sea, when it gives warning of winds coming from afar, echoes as they did then.

When John, that remarkable commander, realized what his men wanted, he instructed them with even better advice, reviewing for them the most important means to safety and reminding them of the victory that would be granted to their mighty realm. When he had checked their roar and bade them to be silent with his



right hand, the men grew still in awe of him and gazed at his face as he spoke. Their minds and ears were ready for his commands, and so, in a clear voice, the leader addressed his comrades: "This day has run its course, comrades, and tomorrow comes to us as a day unfit for harsh battle, for throughout the world it is hallowed to the Lord. Therefore, come, my captains, let us serve Christ with joy. Humbly and with tears let us beg for His protection, and it will come swiftly, I am sure. With His own might God will crush these evil tribes, will take note of our toil and grant new joys to our realm. When the venerable priest has finished the holy rites and duly offered the heavenly gifts to the Lord, and when the soldiers have properly discharged their obligations, we shall set out our tables. But do not let your horses graze too far off on the plains, for I have decided to move our camp after we have had our customary meal. Not that I want to join in grim battle at once. I just want to move to those places quickly so that on the following day, when before long the sun rises from the horizon and touches the world with its flame-breathing steeds, we may join battle in neighboring Lataris and go to our hot slaughter. A long march will not break us down, cavalry and infantry will be brave and will slay these savage tribes with valor." At this the men leapt up with a shout. They applauded and shouted their assent, exulting in their hearts as their units returned to the camp.

Opposite them the rebellious Nasamonians were also holding a council to consider the crisis in the cruel war. They had gathered the unholy ranks of their allied bands along with the other tribes whom the love of spoil and the final death day of their horrible destiny had driven to divide Libya in war. Among them the son of Guenfan was whipping up the bitter flames of war, turning plans over in his mind, impatient of further delay. Nevertheless it was Carcasan who rose first to speak: "The army of John is close and presses in upon us, and cruel hunger now constrains us all. There is but one hope of salvation for our tribes and that is to join battle quickly while the strength of our limbs remains hale and hearty, for our flocks

are our one last hope of nourishment and the rivers' streams our last source of water. Now, as you see, its stock of grain has failed the Nasamonian nation. I need not even mention wine; the water of the streams is our only comfort. If we conquer this enemy, however, then the Moors will have everything, and once the enemy soldier is slain, will plunder a camp filled with countless possessions. The responses which horned Ammon gave us in prophecy, telling us of our victory over the Latin bands in war, will, I am still convinced, remain unchanged."

"Tomorrow must be observed as a feast day by the Roman people," Autiliten took up. "The Roman soldiers, occupied with their customary rites will fear no battle. Order our arms to move forward then. Let us break in suddenly on the disorganized army at the burning hour in the middle of the day while their weary bodies all lie in the shade, weakened by the excessive heat. All we will need is a little extra bravery to break through their double fortification. First, capture the very camp of John their tough general; at the same time gather your standards and choose units that are brave and tightly formed along with captains who are valiant. Then challenge that Latin band. That will be the place where we have to put up a good fight and spill a lot of blood. Have Garsana lead the remaining force in close array to the spot where the villain Cusina has his camp. In that place too an unwavering band of Roman soldiers is hot for a fight. They too have a fierce leader who is preparing to destroy our tribes for the sake of Rome, so long as he can cheer them on, puffed up by his honorary titles, so long as they dub him a commander and blood brother, born of a Latin mother. Pleased with himself because of all this flattery, this murderous foe would like to appear brave and loyal. Once he and his scoundrels are dead, let no Nasamonian speak of other enemies. Everyone else in this land will follow your force and in this way a bold victory will be granted to our standards." The men agreed with his advice, and the abominable tribes bellowed with rage and whetted their minds for war.



Now the waves concealed the day in the ocean and black night followed. Phoebus unyoked his steeds and Cynthia yoked hers as she renewed our strength. She arose from the waves just as he was submerged in the water. All human beings relaxed their limbs in tranquil repose, and torpor-inducing sleep took hold of the other animals whose weary limbs felt the touch of sweet slumber on the plains: the cattle and the various birds, the horrible wild creatures and the cold fish along the shore. But John, once the fever of war was kindled in his heart, passed the sleepless night on watch and, resourceful as ever and wary by instinct, pondered the enormous problems he was facing, as he laid out his tactical plan. Beside him wise Ricinarius was pondering the horrid war too, inwardly at peace, but reviewing nonetheless the various difficulties they faced, employing his good judgement to draw up a list of priorities. They soothed one another's minds in conversation and kept sleep from their eyes by talking to each other. And, oh, how often they both turned and long besought their powerful Lord with tears on behalf of the safety of the realm, of their men, of Libya and of themselves! Nor did they both, although sorrowful, pour out these prayers in vain, for the Father Who terrifies the world with His bolt saw them praying from His lofty abode and set an end to the great labor of the war.

In the meantime the army of the Marmaridans, devoted as it was to nocturnal sacrificing, filled the air with its frenzied roar. They set up altars and called upon their false divinities. They led their cattle around the altars and spilled disgusting gore over the grass in streams. Some men sacrificed to Gurzil, others to you, horned Ammon, and still others worshiped Sinifer whom the Mazax receive in the divine likeness of Mars and imagine to be the powerful god of war. Yet others adored Mastiman, for it is by this name that the tribes of Moors call upon Taenarian Jupiter and, spilling much blood, sacrifice human victims to his destructive godhead. What an abomination, alas! Their pitiful groaning lashed the air on all sides, as their cries struck the heavens. One man pressed his blade to the victims' necks and roused the

very divinity with his words. Calling upon it to venture out through the illusory world of shadows, he bade the god try the sun's path itself. Then, in the pagan way, they tore out the entrails of animals and searched for their fates. But God had checked these practices, and so the divinity was wholly deaf to their chanting and their priest gave replies to none.

Now the sun, resplendent on the edge of heaven's most distant vault, was bursting through the ocean's waters. Rising with a more propitious light, it spread its gleaming rays over the earth at that happy break of day. Then the Christian people came out in the prescribed order, the Roman soldiers and the great-souled captains along with their ensigns. In a place in the center of the camp where among the foremost, the general John placed his tents with their canvas spread out, a priest had set up and draped a large altar and in the manner of their fathers had surrounded it on all sides with holy tapestries. The acolytes had formed a choir and with humble voice sang sweet hymns as they wept. But when the general reached the entrance of this holy precinct and entered, the people burst into groans of grief and let tears blur their eyes with their streams. Their voices struck heaven on all sides and they beat their guilty breasts again and again with their fists as if they were their own foes. "Forgive our sins and the sins of our fathers, we beseech You, Christ," they moaned and with palms extended looked up to heaven and asked for the comfort of the Lord. John himself, in front, with knees and body bent, was moved by piety and uttered prayers for the people. He let his tears pour from his eyes like a river and, striking his breast with one blow after another, made his entreaty in these words: "Creator of the world, the one and only Life and Salvation of our realm, God, Almighty Author of the land and sea and air, You Who fill with Your power the heavens and the earth and the surging sea, and whatever is produced within the earth, base minerals, as well as foul Avernus of the pale souls, You alone hold absolute rule. The fullness of power is Yours as are praise and sovereignty and the strength of Your mighty right



hand. Now, at long last, look down upon the Romans, look down, Almighty and Holy Father, and bring us aid. Crush, I beseech You, these proud tribes with Your power. Bring it about that these people come to recognize You alone as their powerful Lord, even as You crush our enemy and preserve Your people in combat. Then<sup>44</sup> the entire race will condemn their carved god and confess that You, Almighty, are our true God." While he recited this prayer, their good lord made the earth wet with the tears that welled up in his eyes and, moved by piety, grieved at heart for Libya's present peril and for the hard work that lay ahead for the realm and its people. Beside him Ricinarius let tears stream from his eyes too, letting his own face grow moist with their flow no less than did his master. Likewise a suppliant, with sad countenance he begged aid for the Latin people. The great-souled captains and the brave officers, their own breasts moist with tears, lifted their sobs to heaven then, and with them all of the units poured forth prayers before God in tearful voices. The high priest placed the gifts on the altar and offered them on behalf of the Latin people, making the altar wet with his own tears. Then, praying calmly, he gave praise to our Heavenly Father, blessed the offerings and gave them one after the other to Christ, rendering Him the customary praise. And the gifts were acceptable to the Lord of heaven on high and at once sanctified and cleansed the entire Latin nation.

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Joining him with the captains, he said: "Brave Putzintulus, hasten with your troops and standards to where loyal Cusina has set up his own banners. And you too, mighty Geisirith, link your allied band with this man, for it is a worthy thing to bring relief to those who have been loyal. But you, Sinduit, gather the arms of your own soldiers at once and join the Roman lines at the point where brave Ifisdaia has stationed his men and his ensigns. Beside you will stand fierce Fronimuth and he will aid your troops and your standards." He gave these orders to his men, and each soldier followed his own banners in formation for the attack across the plains. The

enemy companies were themselves rushing forward from all sides. With a great shout the Marmaridan army dashed out onto the plain first, shields in hand. They drew their arms back and brandished their spears, as they took aim to hurl them into the fray. Zabeas was there and Bruten, whom a thousand other captains followed. At that moment a thick volley of enemy spears took flight, concealing the sky above. The Romans warded off the wounds borne on the incoming weapons with their shields, and the soldiers' armor groaned beneath the assault. In spite of the countless weapons hurled by the raging foe, however, no spear was stained with Roman blood.

Bravest of all, John was the first to go into battle. Brandishing a spear, he broke into the heart of the enemy force and, when Sasfi turned to face him, struck his cavernous chest with his shaft. The hero rolled from his horse and fell, and the gaping wound produced a flood of gore that spilled onto the dry sand. Moving fast, the general pursued Ifnates and, as the man turned to flee, struck him from behind with a long lance in the spot where the backbone of the rider gathered together his curved ribs with powerful knots. While the enemy warrior feverishly grasped the spear that was stuck in his bones and struggled for some time to pull it out, see how proud Mirmidonis came up and took aim at John with his quivering weapon. The general, however, seized the spear of the dying man and hurled it, leaning into it with all of his might. He pierced the center of his foe's breast and struck his heart with the shaft he had just picked up. Then the tall hero smote Tameneus with an enormous spear and threw him from his horse. Wielding his sword now, he cut off the left hand of Nartus along with his shield. With the same blade he slashed the throat of Samascus, cut the neck of Filetus and pierced the groin of Palmas. Calamen he struck on the face, shattering his teeth and lopping off his nose and cheeks with his steel. The man's horrid limbs struck the ground, and the fields groaned beneath the weight of his fall. Not far from there he met Ancus, who had come to challenge him, and struck him with a javelin. As soon as he fell, John stabbed the breast of Mantus



with his hot sword and, roaring, drove his spear straight through both flanks of Mastuman, using all of his might. He laid Salpin flat on the ground with a pike and, looming fiercely overhead in the saddle, dealt his dying foe a deadly blow. With a flash the blood leapt from his black body in a tall jet and moistened the warm sands around it. Next the hero pursued Altiseran faster and faster and, driving down on him, hurled him to the ground pierced by a spear. He slew Caggun and Tanin and Altifatan and sank his sword into the breast of Anestus. He slit the throat of Autufadin with his blade and engaged haughty Ontisiran with his javelin. He spun off the head of Canapus with his sword and laid Tubian low on the grass with his unbending steel. And so he drove the army of the Nasamonian villains from behind, and the Roman horsemen, their brave officers and the armor-bearers of the general took up the pursuit. In their midst their commander himself galloped on as his men attacked the column of Marmaridans as they fled across the fields, throwing them into confusion, hacking at their bodies, cutting them down and pressing the chase.

After he had been driven from that sector of the battlefield, the Nasamonian returned. He reformed his units and drew them up in a wedge where Cusina was arranging his loyal standards in front of his own motley battalions. As Cusina prepared to meet him, he addressed his troops with these words of encouragement: "Come, Roman comrades and you people loyal to us, make a show of your brave spirits, of your might and loyalty now. Stand up to the threats of these Laguatans and don't let the enemy terrify you as he approaches. See how John has beaten them and is setting all the Roman standards in motion at once. Make your way through the enemy position and then, when he comes, let him praise those who were brave and loyal to the realm. The valor of a man is always known, and what praise there will be for you, men, when you have found favor in the eyes of our commander!" That was the way Cusina set their wavering minds afire and drove the allied forces into battle, sowing the seeds of wrath in all of them as he did. And the men's minds were

stirred by a desire for praise, as the brave Roman army and the Moorish cavalry, side by side with the Latins, broke out on to the plain. The chieftain Cusina, on a rampage in the center of his soldiers' assault, galloped through the enemy's closely formed units, as the brave officers marshalled the Latin arms for battle. They took the shock of the Nasamonian's attack in their accustomed manner, poising their spears and aiming their javelins. At that point the leading companies joined in bitter contests, and their cry went up to heaven. In the same moment dust filled the air, blocking the light of day, and the air itself was curtained off by clouds of missiles as winged steel was scattered from bowstrings and in cloud after cloud lances flew this way and that, some striking men, some the fields. On this side and that the tribes both dealt blows and received them, for the Marmaridans were pressing in with great valor, and only firm hope in the arrival of their commander relieved the anxiety of the chieftain, his guard and his men.

When our general John learned from the report that had winged its way to him that loyal Cusina was being pressed in a hard fight in his sector of the battlefield and that he was faltering beneath the heavy weight of the enemy's arms, he set afire his men's desire to advance against the enemy with these words: "The Roman empire recognizes nations that are loyal and subject to it and considers them as Latin citizens. Because of this loyalty to its allies, it has been accepted and has subjected the entire world to itself, staunchly bringing relief to the humble while humbling the rebellious. Cusina, who is absolutely loyal to our cause, is in the thick of the fight but is uncertain of victory. If the enemy fails in its attempt to cripple him, our renown will endure for centuries. Make the fidelity and might and perseverance of Rome visible now. Up, soldiers, and in this great crisis in this war, bring relief to this man with your aid, strike down these proud tribes and, my comrades, save those who depend upon you."



So he spoke and, setting its standards in motion, his army burst forward. By that point the loyal Moorish contingent was retreating across the plain, and the Laguatans were claiming victory. Their armies vanquished, Putzintulus and Cusina and Geisirith were all in retreat. Then, suddenly, they saw behind them the banners of John, as he advanced toward them. At that sight they regained their spirits, turned the pliant necks of their steeds and, valiant once again, returned at a gallop to the combat.

Fierce Putzintulus in a wild rush against the oncoming enemy, galloped in the lead and broke through their lines first. He laid low Imastan, cutting open a deep wound. He struck brave Nifaten with his sword, cut off the savage neck of black Mamon and, facing his foe Irtus, lopped off his head with his steel, so that the man's blood, as it was mixed with his dashed brains, poured over his limbs. Coming up to his next challenger, Amantus, he thrust a sturdy weapon through his windpipe, inflicting a fatal wound and blocking the path of his voice. Then gore flowed from the man's mouth and, when the weapon was withdrawn, spurted up through two wounds. The leaders of the Ifuraces saw him on the rampage some distance away, right in the middle of their own men's weapons, and so they formed a phalanx, and many thousands turned their arms together, each hurling his own spear against the warrior. He took the incoming spears on his shield. Fearless of wounds and confident in his own power, he had disdained to wear a breastplate. But now, as these thick flights of javelins flew around him, the great-souled leader felt, alas, a dread blade beneath his breast. Unbroken even by so grave a wound, however, he cheered and exhorted his comrades: "The victory, fellow citizens, remains yours. Fight on, men, and send<sup>45</sup> these abominable tribes as a funeral offering to me. If you overcome the enemy even then I shall witness it, even then I shall have greater life and make the Laguatan tribes part of my triumph as I rejoice among the shades. But lofty Carthage with its towering gates will receive you in a great triumph, unharmed

and diminished by the loss of only one man. As he spoke he collapsed beneath his wound, and his companions took him up and laid him, still happy at heart, in their camp. And so this comrade of the Decii passed among the infernal shades, happy in his death. After the war his name would always be blessed, his death remembered as long as our descendents read of savage wars in ages to come.

The Roman contingent, at the order of their commander, now rode through all of the enemy positions, throwing their grim ranks into confusion. And as the enemy wing gave way, the Romans shot hissing darts at them from their twanging bowstrings, and their flights looked like the hollow clouds that release thick hail storms and destroy the crops on the broad farmland. Then the tall corn is laid low under the storm's onslaught, the green tendril may no longer claim its own fruit and even a thick tree is unable to protect its tender branches with the roof of its foliage. In the same way their horrible shafts were shot from their bowstrings, flying on and bearing unfailing wounds, for not a single weapon fell without drawing blood, not a single winged arrow dropped harmless to the ground. Now the brave horses of the natives and the closely-formed enemy themselves were being hacked down, and every warm blade ran red with Massylian blood. A Roman unit armed with javelins came up next, and its officers strewed bodies over the length and breadth of the battlefield in a slaughter that lifted their martial spirits even higher. Yes, our soldiers' arms grew hot then and no Roman's steel was without Moorish blood, for it was their own grief that was a goad to their wrath. Who could explain in words the countless bitter deaths they meted out to the enemy leaders on that field, who the various ends of life, reporting both the enemy dead and captured? Who could name those whom our general himself bravely struck down, as the common Marmaridan soldiers perished nameless and unknown? I shall note in my poem, however, a few of the multitude whom rumor, flying from the enemy to the ears of all, made prominent.



John, powerful as ever in his arms, when he saw the enemy blocking his way, plunged into the crowded ranks of men and cut his way through the rebel companies with his deadly blade. He was like a harvester who watches for the season when his crops ripen and cuts them down with his sharp scythe. First his left hand gathers the stalks with their tender ears, and his right hand cuts them down; then, content with his harvest, he binds countless bundles with a tight rope all the length of his field. Just so Syrtic Altilimas was undone by a wound the general inflicted, fell and was laid low on the grass with a severed neck. Then plumed Alacanza rushed against his mighty foe, brandishing his spear and goading his tall horse again and again with his spurs. But our general, totally unafraid, cut off his head with his sword, and the man's heavy eyes watched his own trunk as it fell. As he died his tongue was unable to utter a word, but it gave forth an indistinct sound nevertheless. Next the general struck down Espotredan in his wild rampage, met and bravely felled Tamatonius and Iugurta and slaughtered Tursus. He struck the horse of Audiliman from behind, his blade's ghastly wounds cutting the sinews and the hard bones of the animal's feet. The horse rolled onto its back but not with its entire body, for it had not yet let its tall shoulders fall to the ground. The brave beast continued to struggle, with its neck still erect and, as it tried to get up, threw its rider to the sand. But John, invincible as ever, came upon the warrior as he was struggling to his feet, - proud even in that moment, see, - and even as he dealt blow after blow to his limbs, the general, himself a fearful vision for a foe to look upon with his menacing blade, struck the man's forehead. Then, beneath a jet of cascading blood the sword made a mash of his brittle bones and brain. At last, grasping his spear, John galloped off across the plain. He threatened Flaccus and drove his javelin straight through his shaggy breast and tough back. The blood leapt up from each wound and poured out over the warm earth's grass. Towering above him, he pierced the long limbs of his next foe, Cernisa, with a pike and in an instant stabbed the heart of frightened Dercus. Next

he struck the flank of Grachus with his blade, then severed the neck of Minisa and cleaved the temples of savage Cutin. He overcame Camalus without killing him, seized him by the hair and dragged him off as a captive. Then he handed him over to his attendants and went on to pursue still other companies in every direction across that battlefield. Labbas drew his arm back and took aim with his spear, making an attempt to provoke the great-souled leader with his weapon. But after he drew close to him and realized how strong his foe was, the unhappy man humbly begged for pardon: "By the bones of Evantis, which have been properly placed in a fitting grave and which produced so great a hero, by the great deeds to be accomplished by your son Peter, whose mighty reputation is borne on the wind among the enemy, a discouragement to these savage tribes and their realm, and by all that your bravery has accomplished, that same bravery by which the Ilaguas are conquered, grant, I beseech you, life to this soul whose crimes have reached an end and, in your victory, keep me for your triumphs after the war. It would be a pleasure to serve a man such as you." Swayed by these words, John checked his blow but swiftly bound both arms behind his foe's back and tied them with a biting rope.

Gentle Ricinarius attacked Urtanc, a warrior devoid of gentleness and in an instant drove his unbending spear through the man's breast. And so that major figure in the abominable war fell before his feet, yes, Urtanc, the great-souled and implacable young soldier, stained the ground with his ill-fated blood. Next Ricinarius made for Meilan. Getting the best of him, he knocked him down with his mighty club, drove him to the ground and impaled him on the warm sands. Then, employing his fiery sword like a scythe, he lopped off the head of Alantas and struck black Sacoma. As the man fell to the grass, his swift horse shied and pawed the soft sand, digging in his hooves in fear and obviously wanting to turn back. But agile Ricinarius applied his whip and, striking the lofty flanks of the horse, forced him in spite of his fear to run on over the wide plain. After the horse had been forced to step



over the decapitated body, Ricinarius galloped across the broad fields, hot for combat, strewing the dead around him and harrassing the Syrtic troops with his weapons in a combat that was going more and more our way. He cut down swift Afun and brave Nicander, then stabbed Sucer, inflicting one bitter wound after another. He slew Tanudus, felled brave Erancus, struck Tinadus with his sword and impaled Enipten on his javelin.

Bulmitzis overpowered Tumudan with a pike and then bravely pursued Licurdan across the battlefield. His weapon ran through the rebel's back and lungs and broke through his chest. Confident in his mount and towering above the ranks of his men, Succur rode along, pursued by Solumuth. But Solumuth was unable to overtake him and so he hurled his ashen spear from a distance across the plain and pierced the flank of the man's horse with its tempered steel point. The horse was done in by the wound and crushed its rider beneath the weight of its fall. And so, although unwounded, Succur despatched his unfortunate soul to the land of the Stygian shades. Nor did the horse to which he had entrusted himself save him with its speed as he entered combat. Not even his own self-confidence, not even Gurzil with his sacred power could rescue the warrior, broken as he was, from his fate.

Now the armorbearer with the general's name cut the head of Vartus from his shoulders with his sword, [Astit cut off Palina's and Mee, Enerdus', as Dorotis slew Tiluzant with his sword.]<sup>46</sup> Then Fastita ran up and pierced the horse of Anzatal with the spear he hurled. He fled just as fast through the thousands of enemy warriors, mingling with his own men and protecting himself behind their closely arranged arms.<sup>47</sup>

Carcasan, shaken by the slaughter of so many of his men, turned the standards of his command post around in order to advance right through the heart of the enemy positions, drawing many thousands behind him. The great-souled hero John saw him as he advanced and snatched the lucky weapons of his armorbearer and namesake

with his hand. The proud general then attacked the man with a javelin, trying to wound his opponent and delivering his blows without fear. And soon blood ran along his weapon, gushing from the deep wound he inflicted and sprinkling the general's garment. As their tyrant perished, the Marmaridan units were suddenly thrown into confusion and took flight. Then not a single one of them hurled a weapon at his foe, but, letting out their reins and rousing their horses to a gallop, they rode away. At this point the Nasamonians could put no trust at all in their force. Side by side, horsemen and footsoldiers ran to their death across those broad fields. And the Roman standards followed them, along with the captains and men and brave officers. John, happy in his men's success in battle, galloped forward too, cutting down the close-ranked enemy bands on the grassland, for they were fighting now on a level field where the soldiers could run freely and strike down the enemy companies with their weapons. And so men rushed in and hacked at the heathen Marmaridan bodies on this side and that, and the Ilaguas were routed and paid the penalty they deserved. The lines of the Ifuraces and the Frexes, along with the Naffur, gave up their lives to our swords, and the fury of the Roman soldiers...

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They crouched in the branches where our soldiers, hot for slaughter, pressed in<sup>48</sup> like hunters who cleverly deceive birds with lime, and streams of blood flowed from all of the trees.

(The final lines of the poem are lacking.)

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *nitidissima* for *ditissima*, Pref. 21.  
<sup>2</sup> *stetit. ore sereno* for *stetit ore sereno.*, 1.118.  
<sup>3</sup> *sociis* for *socii*. 1.514.  
<sup>4</sup> *cunctas* for *curas*. 1.520.  
<sup>5</sup> *Tamen seu iure decebit* for *tantum se iure litebit*, 2.105.  
<sup>6</sup> *lancea saeva* for *iuncta seva*, 2.08.  
<sup>7</sup> *non* for *nunc*, 2.356.  
<sup>8</sup> *petebat* for *terebat*, 2.414.  
<sup>9</sup> *ut* for *et*, 3.26.  
<sup>10</sup> *vultis crescere Mauros* for *multim crescere Mauris*, 3.120.  
<sup>11</sup> *cunctos* for *dignos*, 3.126.  
<sup>12</sup> *artis* for *altis*, 3.166.  
<sup>13</sup> *succedit fortis Ilaguas* for *tunc Naffur anhelus*, 3.189.  
<sup>14</sup> *non Martis vim, non sensit* for *non mentis consensit*, 3.293.  
<sup>15</sup> *asper et* for *aspice ille*, 3.302.

- <sup>16</sup> *urbe* for *orbe*, 3.356.  
<sup>17</sup> *Mastracianis* for *Mastracianos*, 3.408.  
<sup>18</sup> *debueras?* for *debueras.*, 3.415.  
<sup>19</sup> *displicet* for *ductor iacet*, 4.1.  
<sup>20</sup> *exire* for *sensire*, 4.69.  
<sup>21</sup> *fatis* for *fastis*, 4.234.  
<sup>22</sup> *parens hominum*, for *parens, hominum*, 4.270.  
<sup>23</sup> *paruit et placido sic coepit Amantius ore*, 4.315, to remedy the lacuna.  
<sup>24</sup> *tendit* for *tetulit*, 4.420.  
<sup>25</sup> *stratumque* for *tantumque*, 5.133.  
<sup>26</sup> *asper* for *ast tor*, 5.345.  
<sup>27</sup> *ferit et* to remedy the lacuna, 5.458.  
<sup>28</sup> *alibi* for *Albis*, 6.33.  
<sup>29</sup> *sub* for *sic*, 6.98.  
<sup>30</sup> *Garamantibus* for *Garamantidos*, 6.198.  
<sup>31</sup> *et armis* for *arene*, 6.206.  
<sup>32</sup> *in proelia sumunt* for *acies virtute feroci*, 6.260.



<sup>33</sup> *vosque hanc superasse* for *quoque hanc scripsisse*, 6.341.

<sup>34</sup> The Latin text of this passage (585-591) is corrupt. The translation attempts to reconstruct the sense from the words which remain.

<sup>35</sup> *spumatque* for *fumatque*, 7.761.

<sup>36</sup> *super ire* for *aperire*, 7.66.

<sup>37</sup> *caperet* for *caperent*, 7.174.

<sup>38</sup> *iam pariter* for *an patris*, 7.213.

<sup>39</sup> *dicamve satis* for *dicam veratus*, 7.214.

<sup>40</sup> *vivos* for *rarus iam*, 7.414.

<sup>41</sup> *huc* for *hinc*, 7.502.

<sup>42</sup> *vobis* for *suus*, 7.535.

<sup>43</sup> *iunctis* to remedy the lacuna, 8.91.

<sup>44</sup> *tunc* for *nunc*, 8.352.

<sup>45</sup> *mandate* for *mactate*, 8.499.

<sup>46</sup> The text is seriously corrupt for several lines. 8.621-623.

<sup>47</sup> *densis se contegit armis* to remedy the lacuna, 8.626.

<sup>48</sup> *ibi miles fervidus* for *ibi fervidus in...*, 8.654.

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